

Edited by Kathleen Gallagher



The
Methodological
Dilemma

Creative, critical and
collaborative
approaches to
**qualitative
research**

The Methodological Dilemma

This thought-provoking book challenges the way research is planned and undertaken and equips researchers with a variety of creative and imaginative solutions to the dilemmas of method and representation that plague qualitative research.

Fascinating and inspiring reading for any researcher in the social sciences, this comprehensive collection encourages the reader to imagine the world in ever more complex and interesting ways and discover new routes to understanding.

Some of the most influential figures in educational research consider questions such as:

- How does a socio-political context change the course of our research?
- What counts as a 'truthful account' in qualitative research?
- How do the voices of theory and the voices of 'research subjects' struggle to be heard in our research narratives?
- How can qualitative researchers ethically navigate the difficult terrain of research relationships?
- How is the material body rendered in qualitative research?

Each chapter reveals a range of troubling dilemmas related to the critical aspects of research methodology in the social sciences and uses an illustrative case to elucidate the issues encountered by the researcher. Each writer brings a fierce philosophical spirit to her or his work, showing how methods or techniques of data-gathering grow from the theory and analysis of how research proceeds.

A range of topics is addressed in a cross-disciplinary approach which will appeal to all scholars of qualitative research, undergraduate students in education programs and graduate students in a range of disciplines.

Kathleen Gallagher is Canada Research Chair, Academic Director of the Centre for Urban Schooling, Associate Professor, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, Canada.

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approaches to qualitative research

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Kathleen Gallagher's latest book, *The Theatre of Urban: Youth and Schooling in Dangerous Times* (University of Toronto Press, 2007), is based on a study of four schools in New York and Toronto, and presents an unsettling picture of neoliberal North American urban schooling. Her book *Drama Education in the Lives of Girls: Imagining Possibilities* (University of Toronto Press, 2000) received the American Education Research Association's book award for significant contribution to Curriculum Studies in 2001. Her edited collection (with D. Booth) is entitled *How Theatre Educates: Convergences and Counterpoints with Artists, Scholars, and Advocates* (University of Toronto Press, 2003). Her research continues to focus on questions of inclusion, engagement, and artistic practice as well as the methodological and pedagogical possibilities of the arts.

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I wish to thank my graduate students at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto for the ongoing stimulation of their research questions and problems. I would also like to thank my research participants, most often youth and their teachers, who have welcomed methodological experimentation and held me to the highest standards.

I am grateful to those feminist methodologists who have come before me and asked questions of themselves and others that were unpopular. They have paved the way for ever more rigorous questioning of our actions and our choices 'in the field' and 'on the page'.

And, of course, I thank the contributors to this text who have exposed their struggles so that we might all learn more.

Kathleen Gallagher
December 2007

Introduction

Kathleen Gallagher

Odysseus's next danger lay in passing between two cliffs, one of which harboured Scylla, and the other Charybdis, her fellow-monster. Charybdis, daughter of Mother Earth and Poseidon, was a voracious woman, who had been hurled by Zeus's thunderbolt into the sea and now, thrice daily, sucked in a huge volume of water and presently spewed it out again. Scylla, the once beautiful daughter of Hecate Crataeis by Phorcys, or Phorbas – or of Echidne by Typhon, Triton, or Tyrrhenius – had been changed into a dog-like monster with six fearful heads and twelve feet. This was done either by Circe when jealous of the sea-god Glaucus's love for her, or by Amphitrite, similarly jealous of Poseidon's love. She would seize sailors, crack their bones, and slowly swallow them. Almost the strangest thing about Scylla was her yelp: no louder than the whimper of a newly-born puppy. Trying to escape from Charybdis, Odysseus steered a trifle too near Scylla who, leaning over the gunwales, snatched six of his ablest sailors off the deck, one in each mouth, and whisked them away to the rocks, where she devoured them at leisure. They screamed and stretched out their hands to Odysseus, but he dared not attempt a rescue, and sailed on.

(Graves, 2001: 723–724)

Scylla and Charybdis are two sea monsters of Greek mythology situated on opposite sides of a narrow channel of water, so close that sailors avoiding Charybdis will pass too close to Scylla and vice versa. Popular culture has taken up the phrase 'between Scylla and Charybdis' to mean being in a state where one is between two dangers and moving away from one will cause you to be in danger from the other. This phrase is believed to be the progenitor of the expression 'between a rock and a hard place'.

Often 'between Scylla and Charybdis', qualitative researchers choose a course, an alternative route, knowing that research is nothing if not about choices. Along with teaching, creating and writing about research are among the most important aspects of an academic life. Through our research and the choices we make, we imagine the world in ever more complex and interesting ways and re-commit ourselves to our intellectual and political projects. But

we also risk our comfortable norms and truth claims each time we seek understanding. The task of this book is to examine the troubles we encounter as we chart such routes to new understanding.

In the choosing, however, we also find pleasure: the pleasure of creating, of authorship, of placing a frame of significance around something that demands our attention. Scholars know how much intellectual satisfaction can be derived from the roadblocks and missteps, the difficulties of research in the field of education. These obstacles urge us to face our assumptions, confront our investments, consider our ethical commitments, and ask what is conventional about wisdom. These obstacles ask us to read, with exacting attention, our research contexts, to engage in complex research relationships, and to hold ourselves to the difficult and always imperfect task of representation. Sadly, in graduate studies across disciplines, students are increasingly hurried through their methodological dilemmas; the details should not stand in the way of a study well completed. But these dilemmas cloud our certainties for good reason; they compel a philosophical spirit and underscore the difficult work of knowledge production. Our counsel to graduate students to resolve their dilemmas and drive through the ambiguities of their projects may diminish the experience of research and, in the worst cases, foreclose inventiveness and curiosity.

This book is about such inventiveness and curiosity; it has invited some of the most imaginative qualitative research minds to make the most of their research dilemmas, to reflect upon the very process of struggle through the dilemmas and resistances we encounter in our work. Each brings a fierce philosophical spirit to her work. The reader will find, in this collection, familiar paradoxes that reverberate across a range of different research projects and interests. She/he will also find great inspiration in these pages, as the authors engage in honest struggle with the knotty methodological dilemmas of their work, exposing the cracks and fissures with great thoughtfulness and candor. The intellectual and ethical dimensions of social science and humanities research, and education research in particular, are forcefully revealed in our methodological frameworks. And the troubles we encounter in the conceptualizing and the processes of research tell us more about our cultural moment than almost anything else.

What is especially unique about this collection, and long overdue in the field of qualitative research, is a demonstration of how researchers can *mobilize theory*, in creative ways, to think through the ‘pragmatics’ of method. The critical tradition in education is always changing and evolving, constantly informed by new, creative, and post-positivist (inter)disciplinary practices. Critical social research has not produced a tight methodological school of thought. Designs, field techniques, and interpretations have enjoyed a proliferation rather than a narrowing or refining of possibilities.

For the researchers in this collection, methods or techniques of data gathering grow from the theory and analysis of how research proceeds. Each

chapter, therefore, offers readers different kinds of theoretical interventions to resolve the fascinating range of dilemmas educational researchers encounter ‘in the field’ and ‘at the computer’.

I think the challenge of feminist scholarship is in fact the struggle for the sandbox and the tools. That one can go around having a different process of fact-making, finding a different methodology, finding a different process of consensus and sanctioning, is indeed at the heart of feminist scholarship. Such a methodology would entail not necessarily asking fellow scholars for their opinions, but seeking the view of those who might be the users as well as the source of new insight. Might that not make sense?

(Franklin, 2006: 324)

* * *

A vertical view

Each chapter in the book will be elucidated by an illustrative qualitative case, introduced by each author. The chapters will make especially explicit the methodological issues, problems, politics, and theoretical conundrums related to the study in question and, importantly, how the researcher addressed the challenges of the work. The specific case studies within each chapter will be used to explore the broader issue of ‘the dilemma’ – two premises, a difficult choice between two or more alternatives – in research. In each instance, conclusions will be drawn for readers about how one might creatively, critically, or collaboratively approach such research complexities, whether they are theoretical, methodological, or pragmatic in nature. Crucially, each chapter will offer specific strategies for readers to think through the kinds of theoretical and substantive dilemmas commonly encountered by qualitative researchers.

A horizontal view

The authors have situated their work within a much broader discussion of the problems of theory and praxis, particular to a ‘global’, postmodern, and neo-liberal era. In an age where terms such as ‘at-risk’ beset our pedagogical discourses, where students and others have grown up in systems all over the globe plagued by anti-immigrant, anti-welfare, ‘back-to-basics’ rhetoric, how we frame and understand the dynamics of qualitative inquiry in education has serious ethical implications and powerful consequences for praxis. Reading across chapters offers the reader a complex picture of the research climate in the early years of the twenty-first century and proposes critical, creative, and collaborative solutions to a range of contemporary qualitative methodology concerns in the field of education today.

Reading across chapters also reveals that this book hinges on the central problem of ‘representation’ in research: representation of research ‘subjects’,

the researcher 'voice', and the relationships among researchers, research participants, and the socio-political contexts in which research occurs. One might successfully argue that issues of 'representation' are at the very heart of qualitative research because they point to how truths are constructed and mediated; they tell us what and whose truths are present. Qualitative researchers conceptualize methodologies and design methods to 'get at' the problems being studied. They make these choices within particular political contexts, they build relationships with research 'subjects' in order to get closer to the problems being studied, and they find themselves, ultimately, in the complex territory of representing the messy corporeality and materiality of those lives. The chapters in this book expose a range of troubling dilemmas related to these three critical aspects of research methodology – contexts, relationships, bodies – in the social sciences generally and in education specifically.

Representation and contexts

The four opening chapters point to some of the larger ethical, global, historical, virtual, and 'live' methodological problems encountered when larger political environments shape what can and cannot be counted as 'truthful accounts' in qualitative research. The authors in this section take up the significant concerns of socio-political context in their accounts of dilemmas faced in their research sites. Megan Boler takes us into the less well-charted territory of the web and exposes the thorny methodological issues and complex representational practices related to the study of web-based sources, as she moves watchfully through the particular roadblocks and experiments of her own study of online digital dissent after September 11. But she also forcefully brings to bear, on this newer context of 'new media', the perennial questions of responsibility of scholarship to publics, the role of public intellectuals, and the ironies of truth-seeking methods in social science research.

In their chapter, Kiran Mirchandani and Roxana Ng expose the inadequacies of the explanatory power of the 'local–global' discourse when it comes to those whose lives are obscured by the statistics of economic trends. In their creative methodological 'mapping' technique, they invite researchers to read the stories of local experiences against the stories of global processes in order to address the local–global nexus in our research and methodologically render more complex this familiar, if inadequate, binary.

Kari Dehli's chapter is a very personal account of research 'failure' in which the political contexts of a certain recent neo-conservative period in education made the task of representation – in this case of parents engaged in their children's school lives – impossible. Dehli asks provocative questions about the onus that is placed on research representations of contexts and actors that may exceed the researcher's ability (or desire) ethically to 'contain' that complexity. The researcher's positioning both 'in the field' and, later, 'at the computer' are called into question, as Dehli challenges the view of researcher

as autonomous, and depicts the boundaries of what counts as research in education, or indeed what counts as a 'methodological dilemma', as embedded in forms of governmentality.

In my own chapter, I work with the bifurcation of art and science, using a case of research with youth in urban schools, in order to develop an argument for collaborative and theater-based methods in research which may help to rethink the 'social' of social science research and provoke a dialectical interchange between the imperatives of science and the creative impulses of art. This kind of rethinking, or *porous methodology*, asks the researcher to position her/himself differently in relation to the context and the participants of the research, to reimagine the 'gaze' of research by changing the terms of communication, and to leave certain improvisational possibilities, conversational explorations, and analytic practices open in the structuring of a 'scientific method'.

Representation and relationships

The next four chapters closely examine the multifarious questions of 'voice' in qualitative research – of the researcher, of research 'subjects', and of theory – in order to observe the familiar dilemmas of relationship that surface in the research encounter. The authors in this section cross borders in their research and use theory to bridge understanding in their analyses of methodological conundrums. Tara Goldstein's chapter turns specifically to the methodological problems and competing demands of performed ethnography. While innovative and replete with possibility, this relatively new form of research method and dissemination creates a number of problems, both during the research process and as the research performatively circulates its knowledge. The story of the relationship of researchers to participants and actors, and of actors and researcher to multiple-research audiences – carefully exposed by Goldstein – is enmeshed in the politics of cultural production and the dangers of 'ethnographic authority'.

Isabelle Kim and I turn towards the use of digital video in qualitative research and confront historical representations of 'others' by means of the camera's (colonial) gaze. The researchers here attempt to rethink established aesthetics and politics assigned to the camera's eye in order to respond to some of the methodological, epistemological, and ethical dilemmas encountered in such forms of research, which are, undoubtedly, gaining considerable momentum in the field of qualitative research today.

Jane Gaskell tells two research stories in her chapter in order to illustrate the complexities of collaboration between school-based educators and university researchers. As case study methodology has gained prominence in the study of schools, the negotiation of politics and the sometimes shaky methodological ground of this work reveal the competing interests and institutional desires of such collaborations. Gaskell persuasively argues that

it is worth the struggle, however, and offers readers rich lessons in how to navigate the methodological terrain of these exceedingly important relationships in the production of education research.

Madeleine Grumet, Amy Anderson, and Chris Osmond also take two research stories that poignantly reveal the different investments of researchers and research participants, and expand, for the reader, the notion of methodology as having everything to do with research conceptions, processes, and practices of analysis. The discussion of the two cases beautifully reveals the 'discovery of method' and the 'relational character of thought and action' in the art of research.

Representation and bodies

The final four chapters move us into the dilemmas of the body, how it is lived and materially produced in social science research. The authors take up the tremendous complexity of lives lived by particular bodies, across time and space, within and beyond the confines of the research encounters.

Caroline Fusco takes a study of locker rooms to unearth some of the paradoxes faced by the poststructural researcher who undertakes the elusive task of representing the body in ways that do not fetishize or inadvertently tie body representations to modernist claims to truth. In this 'body research', Fusco highlights the theoretical and methodological contradictions of 'capturing' the (three-dimensional) body and subsequently 'writing' the (now two-dimensional) body. She offers, to readers, several stimulating paths for reconciling postmodern methods with the researcher's respect for the actualities of people's lives.

Jo-Anne Dillabough uses theoretical and methodological interventions to confront the past in her contemporary study of economic disadvantage among young women. Historical representations of young women, and the overdetermination of their bodies, create methodological challenges, both symbolic and real, for the contemporary researcher who seeks, through his/her work, to achieve 'temporal justice through method'. While recognizing the contributions of discourse approaches in qualitative research, Dillabough carves out a compelling method and way of thinking about the continuing presence of (historical) others in the study of contemporary lives and spaces.

Patti Lather unpacks the critical practices of researching 'across difference' to make a case for a 'generous reading' across such different socially marked bodies and bodies of knowledge. 'Parallel theorizing' and 'living the present historically' generate her methodological groundwork, which aims to help researchers 'get lost' with the purpose of moving beyond mastery narratives and arriving at critical 'rethinkings'. This working of ambivalence offers both an epistemological and a methodological source of light, as it invites researchers into the practice of a critique that is racially marked and 'responsible to the struggle for voice'.

Sara McClelland and Michelle Fine provoke the notion of ‘release points’ in research on young women’s bodies, those bodies that have so often been objectified and pathologized through research. In their hands, the methodological and analytic practices of ‘body research’ are erotic and complex, and they always exceed the simplistic categories that have held prominence. They invite researchers to ‘peer through layers of cellophane and [try] to understand phenomena that are wrapped up in layers that are produced culturally, politically, and inter-subjectively’. In this chapter, we see again the paradoxes of committed feminist researchers who find themselves in the always-thorny dilemma of the representation of voices and bodies of ‘the disenfranchised’, but who, none the less, seek out methodologically imaginative avenues in order simultaneously to *do* justice and offer challenging critique.

* * *

On the other side of the Rocks Wandering are two peaks through which thou wilt have to take thy ship. One peak is smooth and sheer and goes up to the clouds of heaven. In the middle of it there is a cave, and that cave is the den of a monster named Scylla. This monster has six necks and on each neck there is a hideous head. She holds her heads over the gulf, seeking for prey and yelping horribly. No ship has ever passed that way without Scylla seizing and carrying off in each mouth of her six heads the body of a man.

The other peak is near. Thou couldst send an arrow across to it from Scylla’s den. Out of the peak a fig tree grows; and below that fig tree Charybdis has her den. She sits there sucking down the water and spouting it forth. Mayst thou not be near when she sucks the water down, for then nothing could save thee. Keep nearer to Scylla’s than to Charybdis’s rock. It is better to lose six of your company than to lose thy ship and all thy company. Keep near Scylla’s rock and drive right on.

If thou shouldst win past the deadly rocks guarded by Scylla and Charybdis thou wilt come to the Island of Thrinacia. There the Cattle of the Sun graze with immortal nymphs to guard them. If thou comest to that Island, do no hurt to those herds. If thou doest hurt to them I foresee ruin for thy ship and thy men, even though thou thyself shouldst escape.

(Butler, 1900: Book XII)

At this particular socio-political moment, many public intellectuals find themselves in serious reflection upon the cultural and political climate of academic life. Ongoing threats to democracy and free speech, the scientization of research, the injustices committed upon bodies past and present, the failures of ‘pluralism’, and reductionism more generally, loom large as a backdrop against which committed intellectuals toil, charting alternative routes – creatively, critically, and collaboratively. Out of this climate, I came to the

subject of this book – *The Methodological Dilemma* – and it has been my privilege and pleasure to work with this powerful group of thinkers.

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Part I

Representation and contexts

The politics of making claims

Challenges of qualitative web-based research

Megan Boler

Where is the intelligentsia that is carrying on the big discourse of the Western world and whose work as intellectuals is influential among parties and publics and relevant to the great decisions of our time? Where are the mass media open to such men? Who among those in charge of the two-party state and its ferocious military machines are alert to what goes on in the world of knowledge and reason and sensibility? Why is the free intellect so divorced from decisions of power?

(Mills, 1959: 183)

When we seek to make sense of such problematic topics as human nature, culture, society, and history, we never say precisely what we wish to say or mean precisely what we say. Our discourse always tends to slip away from our data towards the structures of consciousness with which we are trying to grasp them; or, what amounts to the same thing, the data always resist the coherency of the image which we are trying to fashion of them.

(White, 1978: 1)

A discussion of methodological dilemmas must, for me, begin with the question of the responsibility of scholarship to publics. How and when does the knowledge we produce and circulate influence the making of history, policies, and social thought? How do we take account of the certain dilemma of the slippery nature of discourse, which always defers itself away from intention and purpose and inevitably mutates into unpredictable limits and implications through its public circulation? Why are we engaged in social science at all?

The question ‘Where is the intelligentsia?’ posed by the sociologist C. Wright Mills at the end of the Cold War is, rather disturbingly, still on the table. How does one grapple with the frequent disjuncture between the majority of our research pursuits and the need for social change that is ostensibly an aim of such inquiries? Perhaps the question is not who to blame – the pundits and powers that refuse to listen to reason and knowledge that

do not fit their aims of wealth and power, or the academics and scholars who fail to direct their knowledge into policies, or governing bodies where it might effect change in social and political agendas. Blame aside, there is certainly a question of the responsibility of public intellectuals, a question far more rare than one might take to be the case from right-wing attacks on supposed left agendas of universities. In fact, when one seeks discussion of contemporary commitments to public intellectualism, which figures does one imagine? Which intellectual works can one cite? On the topic of responsibility, Noam Chomsky's essay from 1966 remains central in part because the topic is not frequently taken up in scholarly discourse:

Intellectuals are in a position to expose the lies of governments, to analyze actions according to their causes and motives and often hidden intentions. In the Western world, at least, they have the power that comes from political liberty, from access to information and freedom of expression. For a privileged minority, Western democracy provides the leisure, the facilities, and the training to seek the truth lying hidden behind the veil of distortion and misrepresentation, ideology and class interest, through which the events of current history are presented to us.

(Chomsky, 1987: 60)

As a tenured academic scholar, I take this role seriously. Particularly in times of war, and of threats to civil liberties and institutions of democracy, I have taken such matters to heart and increasingly shifted my research to questions of media. I understand media as a social and cultural institution and set of practices which function both as a primary curriculum which should be of great concern to education, and as a complex representational practice (in terms of print, broadcast, and now web-based news media) that effectively governs and delimits social thought within so-called democratic states. Many in education, save the relatively small field of media education scholars and some of the cultural studies of education circle who study popular culture, do not engage media as central to the understanding of what actually constitutes the education of societies and subcultures, and political practices and conceptions of citizenship and democracy. Not only is popular culture arguably more influential on young people than is formal schooling, but questions of media as foundational to citizenship are too often mentioned only in passing.

Beyond the relative silence on media as a site of curricula or tool of social control that necessitates central understanding for those in educational studies, educational scholars too rarely assess how to insert their research into the public sphere, including into news media. A century ago, John Dewey and Walter Lippmann debated this role of the scholarship to news media.¹ Irrespective of where one stands on hopes for democratic engagement on the part of publics, a second fundamental obstacle to engaging public intellectualism has to

do with the contemporary rise in discourses of knowledge mobilization, accountability, and the increased conservatism determining funding which has narrowed the kinds and focus of research engaged by scholars across North America.

Why engage in social science research? My own reasons as an interdisciplinary scholar trained in the humanities are threefold: to ask my own specific questions about social phenomena and issues, and develop a data set that begins to address my specific questions, rather than using the data produced by others which does not always precisely address my questions; to contribute to public debate about questions of media and democracy in times of war, as state interest in war always results in a heightened control of media and damage to espoused ideals of democracy and civil rights, including freedom of speech (specifically, I undertook to study the motivations of individuals who use, write, and produce digital media to create counterpublics and dissent in relation to dominant corporate-owned media); and to engage qualitative research not only for its unique methods of information gathering but because this kind of research affords additional legitimacy beyond speculative knowledge, as one seeks to insert new ideas into the public discourse of media. In short, as an academic committed to critical inquiry about the role of press during times of war and ideals of free speech and democratic citizenship, it became an intellectual responsibility to engage in the kinds of methods that are too often used to justify, as C. Wright Mills (1959: 181) says, being adviser to the king. Rather, I envision these tools in his ideal of remaining 'independent, to do one's own work, to select one's own problems, but to direct this work *at* kings as well as *to* "publics"'. In 2004, when this research proposal was submitted, it is likely that it is only because it was a Canadian and not an American funding source that we received finance for the project (in this case from the Canadian Social Science and Humanities Research Council, 2005–2008).

I wish to contextualize my remarks about, engagements with, and reflections about the nature of social science. From a meta-view, social science is best understood as a set of discourses and in turn as rhetorical approaches to knowledge production. Given my training, I cannot help but be constantly aware of what Hayden White laughingly referred to in our graduate seminars as the 'truth effect'. My graduate studies benefited from the oversight of such scholars as White and Donna Haraway, Jim Clifford, and Helene Moglen, and the public talks and seminars held on the University of California, Santa Cruz campus between 1985 and 1992 by Gayatri Spivak, Stuart Hall, Wendy Brown, Joan Scott, Gloria Anzaldúa, Judith Butler, bell hooks, Teresa DeLauretis, and Angela Davis, among many others. When I think back on this epoch of intellectual history, it is fair to say that this period reflects a remarkable emergence of concerns about discourse and its functions, and operation, and circulation, about the politics of knowledge and representation. Scholars of the late twentieth century were in the midst of perhaps the most

fertile and thorough era of cross-disciplinary investigation about the assumptions and premises of the disciplines in which they worked, whether that discipline be history, sociology, semiotics, or biology – or feminist theory and cultural studies as informed by all of these and many other disciplines. Cultural studies was in its prime in the late 1980s and early 1990s, solidifying through many of its projects the now widely shared questioning of science as a model for truth claims. Yet, arguably, by the mid-1990s, one began to see cultural studies issuing new calls for empirical studies as still necessary knowledge despite the intensive interrogation of the politics of knowledge production.

C. Wright Mills (1959: 13) describes the need for the sociological imagination: ‘It is now the social scientist’s foremost political and intellectual task – for her the two coincide – to make clear the elements of contemporary uneasiness and indifference.’ By ‘uneasiness and indifference’, Mills was referring to the general social malaise at the end of the Cold War. While his writings indicate the generational frequency with which disciplines question their methods, it is also fair to say that the 1980s heralded the greatest ‘uneasiness’ about methodology and truth claims we have likely ever seen. Poststructuralism, or at least vague misreadings of what this means alongside its elision with postmodernism, has had effects now felt within every discipline; there is no discipline whose scholars have not had to grapple at least in stance with poststructuralism’s implications for scientific methods.

It is within that intellectual context that I discuss the questions that arose and continue to arise in making sense of the data collected in my three-year funded study. I pose to the reader and student of social science these questions:

- How can we uphold a meta-questioning stance in relation to our selected methods? In other words, how can we productively question the validity and veracity of the knowledge we claim to produce without losing our capacity as trained intellectuals to be engaged in these important public and critical inquiries into the nature of humans, culture, society, and its problems?
- Why are we using social science methods? Have we merely fallen into a discipline, or are we electing to use these tools, as Mills suggests, to prod the kings? Speaking to the need for philosophy as well as science, Mills (1959: 180) remarks, ‘Were the “philosopher” king, I should be tempted to leave his kingdom; but when kings are without any “philosophy”, are they not incapable of responsible rule?’
- What kinds of ironies are inherent to the limitations of the efforts to make social scientific truth claims? What kinds of productive correspondence can our investigations generate in terms of accounts of the world, and what are the limits of our certainties – both because of the limits of science and because of the inevitably slippery nature of discourse and representations? When do social scientific truth claims function merely as a

self-legitimizing confirmation within a discursive community? In order to speak within certain communities, we must use this language, yet the discourse community in its ties to the legacy of science often discourages one from questioning the methods one engages.

Here is where Mills' advocating of the sociological imagination is so important: we are not to be pawns; we are not to get caught up in micro- or in essentializing claims about all humans or all societies. We must always situate our claims within the historical context in which they make sense. That historical context, I wish to emphasize, requires a recognition of the politics of representation. We are increasingly faced with a power-struggle if not outright war about what might even be called reality. As Ron Suskind reported in October 2004 in a now oft-cited exchange with an 'unnamed Administration official':

The aide said that guys like me were 'in what we call the reality-based community', which he defined as people who 'believe that solutions emerge from your judicious study of discernible reality'. I nodded and murmured something about enlightenment principles and empiricism. He cut me off. 'That's not the way the world really works anymore,' he continued. 'We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you're studying that reality – judiciously, as you will – we'll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that's how things will sort out. We're history's actors . . . and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do.'

Within such a high-stakes game, what are the best strategies for engaging social sciences effectively to understand the many issues which mark great uneasiness of human society and culture? How can scholars become genuine members of a public intelligentsia that has some hope? In the words of Donna Haraway (1991: 187), the

problem is how to have simultaneously an account of radical historical contingency for all knowledge claims and knowing subjects, a critical practice for recognizing our own 'semiotic technologies' for making meanings, and a no-nonsense commitment to faithful accounts of a 'real' world, one that can be partially shared and friendly to earth-wide projects of finite freedom, adequate material abundance, modest meaning in suffering, and limited happiness.

The irony of seeking methods to track discourses of truth

My present research project, 'Rethinking Media, Democracy and Citizenship: New Media Practices and Online Digital Dissent after September 11', was conceptualized after many years of close study of the news media representation, first of the first Persian Gulf War in 1991–1992 and then news representation of war in the years following September 11, 2001. By 2004, my studies not only of corporate-owned news media but of the increased use of digital media by diverse individuals to express dissent and frustration with corporate and dominant news media led me to recognize what I see as an important and crucial paradox: that the desire expressed by publics for politicians and media to 'tell the truth' is held in paradoxical contradiction to the 'postmodern sensibility' (or 'widely shared skepticism' towards authority as it attempts to exert control through spectacle) that all narratives are constructed, that all the world is a fiction. The paradoxical desire for truth alongside awareness of truth's impossibility is a hallmark of this stage of spectacular complicity.²

For the purposes of this chapter, perhaps the best concept to employ to capture the slippery, double-sided nature of the truth problem (the public demand for truthful accounts from media and politicians alongside the general cultural awareness that paradoxically we simultaneously know that any truthful account is also necessarily a representation that cannot be relied upon as truth) is the recently re-popularized notion of 'truthiness'. Merriam-Webster's #1 Word of the Year for 2006 was 'truthiness', a term coined by comedian Stephen Colbert on his cable broadcast nightly 'fake news', which uses satire to critique US politics and the media. 'Truthiness' is defined as 'the quality by which a person claims to know something intuitively, instinctively, or "from the gut" without regard to evidence, logic, intellectual examination, or actual facts' (Wikipedia, retrieved October 10, 2007). This sense of 'troubled truth' captures a recurring theme I first began to notice in 2003 in my studies of indie digital media communications: as stated by one Bushin30Seconds Quicktime production, 'Americans are dying for the truth' (MoveOn.org, 'Polygraph'). This new expression and demand for 'truth' led me to investigate a paradox that I see as a hallmark of the networks of digital dissent of the twenty-first century. On the one hand, many audiences are now aware of the seemingly 'postmodern' sensibility that all truth is a fiction; all representations are socially constructed. However, alongside this awareness is a paradoxical demand for 'truthful accounts', especially from politicians and media. This paradox reflects a 'new desperation' in the face of mainstream media spin especially during times of war.

Methodological dilemmas

For the remainder of this chapter, I describe ongoing questions that reflect perhaps new twists on dilemmas well documented in the vast literature interrogating social science and qualitative research. Without rehearsing those arguments and debates, I will engage some recent analyses by qualitative researchers working in the sphere of web-based qualitative research during the discussion of the particular challenge of studying blogs.

Overall, from the first two years of this study, the methodological dilemmas that stand out to me are these: how to formulate a question or problem; how to delineate data sets from the blogosphere that are theme-based; how to administer online surveys with decent response rate; and how to make meaning from ‘triangulated’ survey results, interview material, and discourse analysis in ways which are compelling and potentially generalizable or at minimum helpful in arguments about areas of ‘social uneasiness’ (to use Mills’ term). Having some clarity about the nuances of these dilemmas which bridge a sense of responsibility to evidentiary notions of justification for claims, alongside the recognition of the politics of all representation and the rhetorical power of science, may help one understand how research into human activity informs theory and vice versa in ways that inform publics to make the best arguments within the public, political, and policy spheres. Over the last two years of studying the motivations of people engaged in ‘digital dissent’, we have gained insight into the nature of social movements and political engagement as distributed through online networks. Yet how one captures that ‘methodology’, makes meaning of what is studied, and then initiates findings into public discourse all pose ongoing challenges.

Problem formulation

How does one engage in ‘problem formulation’ that makes sense for this sphere of inquiry (news media representation and digital interventions through practices of sociable web communications within a repressive epoch of war spin)? How does one track ‘reliable evidence’ of the desire for truthful accounts amid the general cultural sensibility that all the world is a fiction? There is a distinct irony to using a semblance of science to make claims about the problem of truthiness.

The way we framed it within the grant and in the research design is captured in one discourse as follows:

This proposed research examines how *digital* media fosters increasing spaces for dissent and civic participation, despite a climate in which *mainstream* media are increasingly restricted by both the narrowed channels for public participation due to media ownership concentration and the cultural repression following 9/11. In undertaking a systematic examination

of online political communication, the proposed research will investigate the extent to which digital communications expand civil society and modern citizenship and redefine the relationship between news media and democratic participation. Through a grounded theoretical analysis of new forms of media representations, political practice, and cultural production, this study asks how the emerging phenomenon of digital citizenship redefines the public sphere. From this core question, six primary objectives emerge:

- 1 to catalog the digital political practices of weblogs, multimedia political animation production, chat room and listserv participation, with particular attention to the gender, race, and age demographics of online producers;
- 2 to identify the motivations that led to digital users' participation and production;
- 3 to investigate how and when digital political production and circulation is related to perceptions of bias within mainstream television, cable, radio, and print news sources, and thus to illustrate a key facet of new and old media convergence;
- 4 to explore how the Internet has been used to 'counter' or 'correct' perceived mainstream media, particularly in the context of the 'war on terror';
- 5 to examine whether and how online practices have changed offline behaviors, group memberships, or community affiliations;
- 6 to examine whether increased access to the means of production and circulation affects how users see themselves as citizens and whether or not they experience themselves as part of a democratic public sphere.

How one formulates research questions from examination of these practices is not always clear cut. Our key research questions which helped guide our survey design and our setting of interview questions included: How are digital media being used to create communicative networks for political debate and social activism? What are users' and producers' motivations for engaging in online political engagement? Do online participants feel they have a public voice and/or political efficacy? To what extent is/was frustration with mainstream media a motivation for online political activities and digital productions?

The dilemma of problem formulation lies in the fact that how a problem is formulated and which questions one asks determines how one decides to frame the vision and strategy for seeking answers. I identified the general problem in the grant proposal as follows:

A major contribution of this study is to understand an under-theorized area – namely, how participation in civil society has been transformed by

increased access to digital technology and the subsequent growth of weblogs, online political commentary both visual and written, and the 'convergence' of new and old media. At present, while there are systematic studies of Internet use, social cyberculture communities, and to a lesser extent 'cyber-activism', there is not an adequate understanding of how weblogs, online political multimedia commentary, and political 'net art' are changing what counts as civic participation and public sphere. My study engages my expertise in cultural, media, and cyber-studies as a lens through which to analyze new and much needed empirical studies of the participants and producers of this new digital political sphere in the context of the 'war on terror'.

The overarching observation of 'uneasiness', to draw on Mills again, had to do with the perception of the paradox about the desire for truth counterposed by the sense that all truths are representations. I call attention to problem formulation because what strikes me is that, as one moves through the research process, new questions arise and emerge, and a central frustration for me is that after surveys and interviews are completed, one often wishes one had asked another additional question to get at something that has emerged but which wasn't visible early on. Perhaps this frustration can rarely be avoided.

Whatever vagaries remain, one can at least describe what one has done, and explain the systematic process that went into doing this research.³ During Year One (2005–06), we analyzed four web-based networks of circulated dissent: the 150 finalists of MoveOn's Bushin30Seconds campaign, thirty-second movies that address a range of post-9/11 political concerns; weblogs that engage political discussion of media representation of US foreign policy, particularly with respect to the invasion of Iraq; online discussions (threads, blogs, comments posted to blogs) that address Jon Stewart and *The Daily Show*, with particular focus on Stewart's 2004 appearance on the CNN talk show *Crossfire*; and independently produced viral videos that address diverse political issues related to US policy. We developed a validated survey using non-probabilistic convenience sampling, and administered the seventy-question survey to 159 bloggers and viral video producers. During Year Two, we conducted thirty-five semi-structured interviews.

In brief, our findings include the following. Across the survey of 159, the primary motivations of online producers were:

- make a statement/express myself/be heard;
- express anger and frustration with current events or political issues;
- influence others (especially in order to influence election results);
- offer 'corrective' function to counter mainstream media.⁴

The strength of our findings, I would argue, comes from the collaborative, collective, and interdisciplinary brilliance of the research team members. Each

of the four sites of investigation at the discourse analysis stage had two people assigned to it. The eight team members met as a group every two weeks, and with a clear agenda we would discuss the research formulation, process, questions arising, and goals and directions for the first phase of discourse analysis. In addition to at least two people researching each site, we had another who was the lead on the survey design and another with whom we consulted about discourse analysis of the web-based materials.

As the Principal Investigator (PI), I was the only one who knew what each sub-team was researching and finding. This ‘PI isolation’, as it might be termed, has the limitation that there was not another member of the team who was familiar with all the data across the four sites, and so I lacked someone with whom I could compare notes to discuss differences between the findings between, for example, the analysis of blogs as compared to the analysis of the Bushin30Seconds. Yet, our reflective questioning about our methods was ensured by bi-weekly collective discussions, and a threaded online discussion about methodological dilemmas.

The unique challenge of studying blogs

Some will say the best way to explain one’s data set selection is simply to be able to explain the systematic way and the method by which one went about what one did. This, it would seem, is an excellent standard for studying blogs, because they are by nature extraordinarily overwhelming in their sheer numbers, length, and magnitude. However, explaining one’s system surely ought to include explaining the genuine challenges of the often bumpy and uneven process of creating one’s system or ‘method’.

In this section, I will thus draw attention to two key areas of challenge in selecting ‘data sets’: in the instance of studying online discussion of *The Daily Show*, a decision made to ‘omit’ fansites because these did not meet our assumptions of what constitutes ‘political’ online production; and in the instance of blogs, the challenge of choosing which blogs to select from the millions available online. By contrast, Bushin30Seconds offered a clear data set – 150 independently produced Quicktime movies that had been selected by MoveOn.org and remain archived online. (The fourth site of study, virals and memes, also posed different challenges for reasons I will discuss in a later section.)

The first challenge, how we selected blogs and discussion forums as data for political discussion of *The Daily Show*, raises questions about how researchers conceptualize the very terms or categories that define a given data set – in this case, what counts as ‘political’. These concerns were noted insightfully by research team member Catherine Burwell.⁵ At the beginning stage, our work on *The Daily Show* appeared to be straightforward. We intended to locate websites, blogs, and discussion boards dedicated to the show, and, once found, analyze and code them. Within the first few days of searching, however, we

realized that our work was complicated by issues of both quantity and content. The search term 'daily show' yielded more than three hundred thousand hits on Google Blog, and over one million on Google. We were surprised not only by how frequently *The Daily Show* was referred to, but by the wide range of contexts in which it was mentioned. Blogs devoted to celebrity gossip, entertainment news, television reviews, and political commentary on both the right and left took up *The Daily Show*; discussions of the program appeared, predictably, on boards dedicated to comedy, entertainment, and politics, but also on forums designated for the discussion of sports, music, and family. Also notable were a large number of sites devoted entirely to *The Daily Show* and Jon Stewart, with titles such as *Jon Stewart Intelligence Agency*, *The Jon Stewart Shrine*, and *The Stewart Supremacist Site*. Because we were looking for extended reflections on the program, these held special interest for us. But they also presented a conundrum. The project was about online spaces for civic participation and the possibility for new modes of political activism. Yet most of these sites devoted exclusively to the show demonstrated more interest in celebrity concerns and cast changes than political change, and greater interest in Jon Stewart's 'manliness' than in his critique of mainstream media. As one of *The Daily Show*'s most prolific fans, Anita, wrote succinctly in the subtitle of her blog (<http://lizabeatme.blogspot.com/>), 'If you want politics, go away.'

We had, in short, entered the realm of Jon Stewart fandom, which included fan listings, fan forums, blogs, and personal websites. Features of these sites are varied, and incorporate spaces for fans to interact with one another, contribute expressive visual and written content, read more about their fan object, and link to relevant sites and articles. *Jon Stewart Intelligence Agency*, for example, which bills itself as 'the biggest, unofficial, scariest, funnest Jon Stewart fan cult club on the net', includes a discussion forum, a space for fans to contribute fan fiction, poetry, and essays, and a 'Jon News' mailing list. On *Commentary on the Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, fans can download screen caps, read transcripts, and skim pages of quotations from past shows. And on *The Jon Stewart Experience*, one of the most recent *Daily Show* fan sites, readers can participate in 'The Daily Show Online Edition', in which fans collectively write imaginary segments for the program, including openers, fake news segments, interviews, and 'moments of Zen'.

The significance of these sites did not elude us entirely. In our fieldnotes and meetings, we discussed the similarities between these sites and some of the political blogs, which were just as likely as the fan sites to relate gossip, such as the birth of Jon Stewart's second child or the appearance of a celebrity guest. We also noted the important role that these sites played in archiving televisual material. Despite the anti-political subtitle of her blog, for example, one of Anita's many *Daily Show* pages provides transcripts of Stewart's interviews with Howard Dean and John Kerry prior to the 2004 election, forcing us to ask questions about what might count as politically significant

activity, and about how the political is defined, and by whom. Finally, we were pushed to ask just why Jon Stewart and a program that regularly critiqued the mainstream media and challenged the government might become objects of such intense fan feeling.

But even as we were able to recognize these challenges, we were, at this early point in our thinking, unable – or perhaps unwilling – to make connections between these fan sites and the more overt political motivation apparent in the Bushin30seconds videos or the political blogs. This oversight might be explained by the historical marginalization of fans and fandom. Even as fan practices move into the mainstream and fans themselves become coveted audiences, fans and fandom continue to be stereotyped as irrational, emotional, and – most relevant here – peripheral to the political sphere. As van Zoonen (2005: 56) has written, fandom and citizenship are constructed within modernist political discourse as two very different entities: ‘Supposedly, entertainment brings audiences composed of fans into being, whereas politics produces publics composed of citizens. Audiences and publics, fans and citizens, are thus constructed as involving radically different social formations and identities.’

In sum, the challenge faced in selecting which ‘data set’ to include for our analysis of *The Daily Show* was determined by a retrospectively reductive and overly narrow definition of what kinds of engagement might constitute ‘online political discussion’.

The second challenge we faced was what criteria were to be used for selecting blogs that addressed concerns about mainstream media representation of the US invasion of Iraq.

I will quote here from some of our discussion threads to give a flavor of the processes by which we had to change and adapt our methods of selection. Jennifer Kayahara is a Ph.D. student in the Sociology Department at the University of Toronto who worked exclusively on the blog data gathering and interviews. Early on in our collaborative bi-monthly meetings, I invited members of the team to post questions and notes about our methods in the online discussion forum. The project funded Jennifer to attend the 2005 meeting of Association of Internet Research (AOIR) and take notes about key methodological issues arising in related web-based qualitative research and particularly studies of blogging. Thus, Jennifer was well positioned to analyze the challenges of the process of delimiting an appropriate data set.

This early post illustrates the very basic dilemma of deciding how to ‘plunge into’ the blogosphere and begin deciding which of the fifty-six million blogs (and within each of those sometimes thousands of postings) to examine and analyze:

Author: Jennifer Kayahara Note #46

View: 0.2 Methods Rants

Creation Date: Nov 4 2005 (17:10:42)

Last Modified: Nov 13 2005 (15:15:25)

Finding blogs to study

Question: What processes should we use to find blogs to study?

- 1 What is a blog? For now, I'm working with the definition given in Herring, Scheidt, Bonus and Wright, 2004: 'frequently modified webpages in which dated entries are listed in reverse chronological sequence'.
- 2 Getting a full and accurate count of all of the blogs/war blogs/political blogs out there is impossible. There is no comprehensive central registry, and all of the tools that exist to locate blogs (Google or Google Blog, Technorati, blogrolls, etc.) are flawed. This is an ongoing problem in a variety of areas of study, and not one unique to blogs.
- 3 Pragmatically, it would seem the best approach is to combine the various tools at our disposal in order to generate as diverse a selection of blogs as we can, within the criteria we lay out. One approach would be to use Google to find a first wave of blogs, and then follow the links and blogrolls of those blogs out into subsequent waves until we've compiled a large enough sample. Since the project is explicitly tackling multiple ideological perspectives, care should be taken to ensure that we find blogs grounded in multiple ideological perspectives.

In addition to drawing on existing literatures about discourse analysis and structuring qualitative studies, I engaged colleagues in lengthy conversations about their qualitative research expertise. The dilemmas I encountered and which are raised in these threads are in part endemic to anyone reflecting on the politics of knowledge construction, but as well we faced challenges unique to web-based research. As Nancy Baym (2006: 79–80) writes, 'qualitative research is beset by a particular set of problems. These are exacerbated in internet research . . . How are we to determine what evidence is good enough to make a claim or how many subjects are enough?' Foot (2006: 88) identifies this challenge in her recent essay: 'As an evolving set of structures . . . the hyperlinked, co-produced, and ephemeral nature of the Web challenges traditional approaches to research of social, political, and cultural interchange.'

Author: Jennifer Kayahara Note #49

View: 0.2 Methods Rants

Creation Date: Nov 7 2005 (23:45:22)

Last Modified: Nov 13 2005 (15:17:29)

Builds On: Finding blogs to study

Selecting blogs to study

NB: Following the November 11th meeting, some of my recommendations have changed. Therefore, the recommendations listed in this post should be considered historical process rather than current policy.

Questions about Criteria

- 1 Are we interested in war blogs or political blogs that discuss the war? How do we plan to analyze them? How many pages? How many samples? Do we need it to be war-only material? General ones are probably read by more people; does that matter? War-only blogs are probably read by more dedicated people; does that matter?
- 2 Written by US or written elsewhere?
- 3 Independent or MSM-linked or both? It says indie in proposal – does that mean they don't get paid for their blog (apart from ads?) or they don't get paid for their political opinion in general; does it rule out people who get hired by political parties because of their blogs?
- 4 Do we want a variety – people in the army, official blogs, MSM, indie?
- 5 How long do they need to have been around to be included? (Are ones started before the attacks or war eligible, or are we only interested in people who started blogging in response to events? If so, which event?)
- 6 How often do they need to update to be included?
- 7 Do we care about readership – is it about the activism, even if useless, or about its effects?

It was at about this point of being lost already in the amount of data that three colleagues who have extensive years of experience conducting qualitative research described to me the 'shiny crow method': collecting what looks shiny, exciting, and bright. Our group continued to debate how to decide what to select for study within such a large set as the political blogosphere.

Interestingly, our discussions naturally moved towards what Foot describes as the importance of the length of existence and duration of a blog. She argues (2006: 89) that web sphere analysis should take the following process:

Web sites related to the object or theme of the sphere are identified, captured in their hyperlinked context, and archived with some periodicity for contemporaneous and retrospective analysis. The archived sites are annotated with human and/or computer-generated 'notes' of various kinds, which creates a set of metadata . . . Interviews of various kinds are conducted with producers and users of the Web sites in the identified sphere, to be triangulated with Web media data in the interpretation of the sphere.

This certainly describes our process fairly closely. A further key aspect for us was the need to select the broadest possible representation of political views on the theme we were investigating. However, the theme or topic itself had to shift in the process of our searching.

And because it is the nature of many blogs to link to other sources, here we face a very central challenge in studying blogs. How much of a blog needs to be the author/poster's original commentary? Or to what extent (as Chantelle Oliver noted during one of our team meetings as we discussed our web-based research of *The Daily Show*) is the posting of material like 'wearing' clothes (in this case *The Daily Show*) – choosing to display a cultural image or voice or sign as part of one's identity and self-fashioning, in which case a post need not include 'original' self-authored material? It is, after all, the nature of blogging to link and quote other sources extensively, posing for the researcher an added challenge of interpreting the blogger's own intended position or meaning.

The next post highlights the importance of something Foot demands – a kind of archiving that protects against the naturally ephemeral nature of blog existence and hence accessibility – the uniquely ephemeral, web-based 'Will you still be here tomorrow?' challenge:

Author: Jennifer Kayahara Note #50

View: 0.2 Methods Rants

Creation Date: Nov 8 2005 (0:04:24)

Blog Coding: structural vs. content information

I'm realizing as I consider why I was uncomfortable with the existing coding scheme that what I actually want are two types of information – structural information and content information. It's probably my quantitative training that cries for structural information, but I think there might be a paper hidden in there somewhere.

By structural information, I mean:

- 1 Blog title
- 2 URL
- 3 How many people post to the blog (individual or community effort?)
- 4 Information about the blogger(s) – age, gender, race, class, occupation, stated ideology, etc.
- 5 When the blog started
- 6 How often it gets updated
- 7 Blogroll contents
- 8 Technorati rating

There's probably more information that I want, but that's the start. Stuff that will let us draw distinctions, sort the content information so that we know

who says what. I don't know whether that will end up being important information, but I think we should collect it now because it will be painful to go back and collect it later.

The content information is fairly obvious, I think. It's what most of the coding scheme is dedicated to, what we're supposed to be focusing on as we generate new codes. Actually, I'm not sure the coding scheme we have right now is really a coding scheme, it's more of a sensitizing document, telling us what to focus on. The codes will come later, after we look and meet and discuss and argue.

Significant in this next post are notes that reflect a conversation we had in which I had come to realize that the very process of moving through the blogosphere – the process of *hyperlinking aporia* as a randomized research set, wandering in the vastness of digital bits and bytes – was partly determining what we selected to examine.

Ideally there needs to be ways of mapping where and how one moves, and how this movement is driven by which kinds of links or visuals, and how this movement changes the focus of study. It is as if hyperlinking itself begins to define what and how one sees, what filters to the top as an identifiable delimited question or topic.

Author: Jennifer Kayahara Note #123

View: 0.2 Methods Rants

Creation Date: Nov 21 2005 (18:08:36)

Builds On: Blog Coding: structural vs. content information

Networking and gaps in the data

I'm still running into problems trying to figure out how to capture all of the information we will want or need in a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework.

As I mentioned previously, there's some information that doesn't really lend itself to CDA, but will still be necessary for analyzing our data . . . assuming we care about who is saying what and not just what is being said (and I'm under the impression we do). This is what I described as structural information – demographics of the blogger, basic information about how long the blog has been in existence, and so on.

After Monday's meeting with Megan and Catherine, however, I've realized that even this doesn't capture all of the information that we're after. During the meeting, *Megan suggested that we use blogging to record our analysis, both because it would be cool to say that we studied blogs using blogs (and I agree), and because it would allow us to more effectively link around, follow the structure of the blogs we're studying, and keep track of how we found each post.*

I argued against the idea on the grounds that it would be too hard to analyze later – we’d wind up doing a CDA of ourselves. (Not necessarily a bad thing, but it strikes me as a different sort of project.) I still believe that we need charts and tables and lists of quotations, but I also think that by using those, we’re failing to capture some of the interaction and discussion that’s at the heart of blogging. And I think Megan’s right to object to us losing that information. I just haven’t figured out yet how to capture it. And I don’t know if a CDA technique has been developed for analyzing it, or if we should be looking elsewhere for analytical tools (social network analysis?) or developing our own. I’m trying to envision the paper we might write, and how the analysis might work. When I’ve figured it out, I’ll write more about it. [emphasis added]

In summary, the analysis of blogs raises fundamental questions: How does one delimit the data set? What criteria shall be used to justify inclusion and exclusion? How precisely does one ensure ideological and demographic range, given that one’s research topic may not ensure such range and given that bloggers’ identities are not always clear? How do we trace our movement through the blogosphere, movement which itself likely determines the path that helps create the data set? The clearest imperative seems to be outlined by Foot, when she addresses the question of archiving and the linking nature of what she calls a ‘Web sphere’ as a unit of analysis. Her emphasis on capturing data in its hyperlinked form again reiterates the key point I made during our process of data collection: namely, that the process of linking as part of the data-gathering process needs to be studied and captured alongside the examination of selected data. Fieldnotes may take a new form in the age of web-based discourse analysis: how we get lost in the aporia of the web leads us to paths which then must be systematically discussed as more than a web of random hyperlinks.

Virals find you, you don’t find them

Another set of data that proved challenging to study was the fourth site of inquiry: independently produced virals. Viral videos have recently been popularized, especially through host sites like YouTube. However, virals have been circulating through web-based networks in myriad forms since the inception of the web. We have all received a viral video, or viral image or document – think of those moments when one receives the same link from numerous people, which indicates a particularly popular viral. Examples of popular web-based virals in North America include the Dove ad campaign which was launched online (though also broadcast on television); Jib-jab, a humorous cartoon of Bush and Kerry singing ‘This Land Is Your Land’, which

circulated extraordinarily widely during the 2004 election campaign. YouTube in fact changes the nature of virals to some extent, because it has a searchable hosting site that is (sometimes) less ephemeral and also tracks visitors, compared to previously when someone would send a link without visitors likely ever to return to that hosting site again.

Virals are notoriously hard to trace in terms of their circulation. Our interviews suggest that viral producers tend to feel a sense of being heard less than bloggers, which is in part due to the fact that it is so difficult to examine how one's viral circulates (as compared to website visitors or comments on a blog).

By definition, one of the aspects of this online phenomenon is that they come to you – one does not often find them. They are not nested in one place, collected to be discovered. In the end, I assembled a team of six savvy research assistants to 'search' for virals and memes (another term used to describe the same thing). The amount of human energy and resources required for looking for these ephemera of social networking practices proved consistently elusive. We did have the good fortune that I had met at a conference in Budapest one of the organizers of a memefest, Oliver Vodeb, who kindly was willing to forward the online survey to participants in the event. However, of his 'data set' (a website of hundreds of visual digital productions that were part of an annual memefest), many were not in English, and many were not of a political nature. This again raises the question of what kind of data set one is drawing from, and what one might conclude from the analysis of the context of the selected examples. However, his access to this population was especially useful as we moved into developing a validated survey.

Online surveys

One member of the team and I invested several months developing a careful seventy-question survey designed to assess online digital producers' motivations for engaging in dissent. The phases of this work are no doubt familiar to many, though I would venture to say the amount of time we spent validating was perhaps extraordinarily extensive. Laura Pinto and I developed questions accordingly that best seemed to get at the research questions of the project. However, while we spent a vast amount of time developing, validating, testing, and piloting our survey, the issues of finding contacts to whom one administers the survey and response rate remain a challenge.⁶

During the time of validating the survey and before our pilot, I contacted PEW Internet and American Life Project (a non-profit organization which 'produces reports that explore the impact of the internet on families, communities, work and home, daily life, education, health care, and civic and political life' (<http://www.pewinternet.org/about.asp>) and discovered they were in the process of formulating a similar telephone survey about blogging practices.

When their findings were soon published, I noticed that their response rate was quite low. In their report, 'Bloggers: A portrait of the internet's new storytellers' (Amanda Lenhart and Susannah Fox, July 19, 2006, www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/186/report_display.asp), they describe the limitations of the survey having to do with the impossibility of a random sample because: it was a callback survey, which biases who returns the call; second, the response rate was 71 percent, which yielded a low number of respondents; and finally, they encountered difficulty finding bloggers willing to talk with them, so the survey was conducted over an unusually lengthy period of time, which meant that the nature of the blogosphere and its vocabulary was changing as they conducted the survey.

This highlights the genuine challenge in online surveys of creating a randomized sample. Our team spent extensive time collating email contacts for bloggers, for example, from across political perspectives, gender, age, and race, as far as could be known from online profiles. Our response of 159 reflected a reasonable sample, yet without vastly more human resources of time it is extremely difficult to conduct a survey whose results are generalizable. In our case, a majority of respondents self-identified as left of center, so the interesting findings are not easily generalizable across the wider populations we were sampling. The question of generalizability always raises issues for qualitative researchers, and particularly, it seems, for online surveys, where it can be difficult to control response rates and the demographics of those who elect to respond.

Making sense and engaging in public discourse

For we should recognize that what constitutes the facts themselves is the problem.

(White, 1978: 47)

If we do have a sense of real problems, as they arise out of history, the question of truth and significance tends to answer itself: we should work on such problems as carefully and as exactly as we can. The important work in social sciences has usually been, and usually is, carefully elaborated hypotheses, documented at key points by more detailed information. There is, in fact, no other way, at least as yet, to confront the topics and themes that are widely acknowledged as important.

(Mills, 1959: 72)

At the time of this writing, we are currently in the process of analyzing and triangulating the year of discourse analysis; the survey findings; and the analyses of the thirty-five semi-structured one–two-hour interviews, conducted primarily by telephone but several in person, with blog and viral video authors and producers. Interview data is an excellent source for

material that allows us to analyze discourses and perspectives on the motivations of bloggers and producers. These findings are particularly rich and exciting.

In addition to the widely debated questions of how one conducts interpretation and when and how one can make a compelling claim, for me an ongoing concern, with which I opened this chapter, is: how do we make our work speak more broadly? How do we get our work into the public sphere, especially if the complexity of our findings is not always reducible to a soundbite that lends itself to the soundbite sphere?

We are also in the process of developing a new mode of public intellectual research dissemination. The idea is to create three-minute videos using the audio of interviews and engaging a visual artist to create the visual track. For this, we use short soundbites from different interviews, all on specific themes that have emerged as central through our coding process (for example, frustration with corporate media; concerns about the electoral process; the function of the web within the political and technological/cultural landscape). Once we have produced a number of these short videos, they will function as a kind of public soundbite to highlight our research findings, and interested viewers can access more information on the research website. Our aim is to produce three to six three-minute 'remix' compilations of audio-bites from across interviews. To date, I have invested significant resources in the following process. First, we read through transcripts to highlight key ideas. We then grouped these into themes. Then, we listened to the audio for each highlighted phrase. This proved obstacle number one: some of the greatest points are made in monotone, or spoken with a great deal of interference, or recorded too quietly – in short, the audio quality does not do justice to the words. Hence, one must select audio-bites of high quality. A second challenge is that of the short attention span of soundbite culture. With the aim of each remix being three minutes in length, we were pressed to find short, snappy clips that ran no longer than six seconds. While one can easily find interesting thirty-second audio clips, we were challenged to try to edit these down to the desired length. There is an obvious decontextualization that occurs in this process. This runs the risk of the final clips seeming 'overly edited'. One hopes, then, that the listener might opt to go to our website and listen to longer clips of the interviewee for context. Indeed, ironically, this suggested method for circulating data into the public sphere faces the same dilemmas as corporate media: how to package and sell ideas in seductive forms.

Once I had compiled these audio clips, I sent the set of themed clips to visual artist Eric Blumrich and engaged him to create a visual montage to accompany the audio.⁷ We are still in the process of completing the other remixes. This has proved to be an endeavor that requires significant time and resources (of sound editing, finding willing artists, designing means of 'launching' this web-based data, etc.). None the less, I hope that researchers will continue to explore this dissemination direction. It was striking that our interviewees were

extremely enthusiastic about having their interview audio used for this remix purpose. As researchers, we face the challenge of injecting complex research into the public sphere – a challenge that public intellectuals need to take seriously by developing our rhetorical and popular means of interjecting our research into public debate.

Conclusion

How can we ensure that social science's extensive self-reflection about methodology includes vastly more discussion of how we can insert our best and complex research into the public sphere? It is helpful to return to Mills' suggestion of the three possible roles of social scientists. The first role is the philosopher king, one who claims an elite and superior understanding of reason and hence truth from that possessed by the 'masses', and is thus granted power to make decisions. Second, Mills notes the social scientist's opportunity to serve as the 'adviser to kings'. In an age of accountability, social scientists are called ever more into such roles. For instance, at the 2007 American Psychologists Association Meeting in San Francisco, some members of the organization held a public demonstration and made extensive internal efforts to change the APA's code regarding whether and how psychologists are involved in the torture of political prisoners. However, the APA voted overwhelmingly to reject a measure that would have banned its members from participating in interrogations at Guantanamo Bay and other US detention centers. Mills decries the abuse of this role of adviser to the king as often falling into bureaucratic inefficacy or worse – failing one's moral and intellectual integrity by pandering to the king's wishes.

Mills' third option (1959: 181) is 'to remain independent, to do one's own work, to select one's own problems, but to direct this work *at* kings as well as *to* "publics". Such a conception prompts us to imagine social science as a sort of public intelligence apparatus, concerned with public issues and private troubles and with the structural trends of our time underlying them both.' To my mind, this independent role of social science suggests the most promising path of achieving 'an account of radical historical contingency for all knowledge claims and knowing subjects . . . and a no-nonsense commitment to faithful accounts of a "real" world . . .' (Haraway, 1991: 187).

I invite my colleagues to consider collaborative ways in which we can support one another and the social scientists of the next generation to learn how to engage our work in the messy world of politics and truth claims through the work of public intellectualism.

Notes

- 1 Dewey had optimistic faith that if scholars could condense their research and ideas into popular press, the public would be stimulated and excited and pursue further reading and information. Walter Lippmann contested Dewey's optimism, and expressed his more 'elitist' view that only a fraction of the public was truly up to the job of becoming the kind of informed citizen capable of engaging productively in democratic decision-making. Lippmann thus held less hope in the power of the press as playing a key role in stimulating publics into active citizenship. For excellent discussion about Dewey and Lippmann's debates and Dewey's work *The Public and Its Problems*, see Robert Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).
- 2 This argument is more fully developed in my 2006 essay '*The Daily Show*, *Crossfire*, and the will to truth'. *Scan Journal of Media Arts Culture*, 3(1), <http://scan.net.au/>, and in a chapter written with Stephen Turpin, '*The Daily Show* and *Crossfire*: Satire and sincerity as truth to power', in *Digital Media and Democracy: Tactics in Hard Times*, ed. Megan Boler (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008).
- 3 I am grateful to Donald Blumenfeld-Jones, who pointed this out to me succinctly and clearly from his extensive experience with qualitative research methods.
- 4 See www.meganboler.net for extensive findings and analyses of our research findings.
- 5 This following discussion of the relationship of fan sites to political content in relation to our study of *The Daily Show* is developed at much greater length in Catherine Burwell and Megan Boler, 'Calling on the Colbert Nation: Fandom, politics and parody in an age of media convergence', which will appear in the *Electronic Journal of Communication* in Summer 2008.
- 6 Again, see www.meganboler.net for full details of the survey and survey analysis.
- 7 You can see this video at www.meganboler.net. To see Eric Blumrich's amazing catalog of videos see his site: www.bushflash.com.

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Linking global trends and local lives

Mapping the methodological dilemmas¹

Roxana Ng and Kiran Mirchandani

Introducing the dilemma

Discourses on globalization are characterized by references to interstate relations, transnational corporate policies, international law, and multilateral negotiations that point to a singular and simplistic focus on ‘the economy’. The ‘data’ that reflect and reference these discourses are usually available through statistical information such as figures about trade, investment, and profit. When referring to garment production, for example, policy-makers, retailers, manufacturers, and industry experts speak of the decline of this sector in Canada in terms of global competition, free trade, export/import figures, the size of the labor force, and so forth. Rarely is the discussion focused on people – the actors, who are the real forces behind statistics and economic trends. Linking the global trends with the everyday lives of people is thus a problem for researchers of economic globalization who begin with the daily lives of people. This was the challenge we faced when we conducted a study of changes in the garment industry in Toronto, Canada, between 2001 and 2005.

While our focus was to explore the experiences of garment workers in Toronto, the official statistics and information on this sector mainly described gross trends that obscured the everyday lives of the workers who were our primary, albeit not exclusive, interest. They also revealed little of the diversity, complexity, and variation within the garment industry, which has been a mainstay of the Canadian economy since industrialization. Our challenge was complicated by two additional problems. First, the individuals whom we interviewed saw their situations as individual and unique. Workers experienced their changing circumstances as local, relating to the attitudes of their bosses and supervisors, for example. The owners and employers interviewed frequently constructed their work as small scale and isolated. With some exceptions, the global trends and forces that we gleaned from the literature and popular media (O’Connell, 2001, 2003) were rarely overtly expressed by them. Furthermore, the respondents contributed to the mystification of garment production themselves by refusing to name the retailers, contractors, and

subcontractors who formed the hierarchical pyramid supply chain of the garment industry. Many genuinely did not know.

Thus, in conducting our interviews and analyzing our data (which continues as we write this chapter), we faced some major issues. We knew that a straightforward thematic analysis of the interview data would not yield a meaningful understanding of the global transformation that was occurring and continues to take place. We also knew that statistics and other official documentation told only a partial story of garment production. Thus, we did not want to rely on them to shed light on people's lives (although we recognized that they attempt to capture these lives in gross terms). However, we did want and needed to understand people's experiences in terms of the overall context of globalization described by economists, policy-makers, and industry experts. Our challenge was how to discover the links between global processes and local experiences, and how to bring them into a relation of necessary dependence upon each other.

Mapping the global–local divide

We were helped by feminist critiques of the binary construction of the local and the global. In this construction, the local is positioned as inferior: 'the global is represented as sufficient, whole, powerful and transformative in relation to which the local is deficient, fragmented, weak and acted upon' (Gibson-Graham, 2002: 30). In fact, feminist theorists have documented the ways in which global practices constitute, and are continuously formed in relation to, the local everyday lives of workers around the world. Much attention in feminist transnational theory in recent years has focused on the need to move away from grand theories, which characterize the globalization as a 'meta-myth' (Bradley *et al.*, 2000), a 'rape script' (Bergeron, 2001), or a 'narrative of eviction' (Sassen, 2001); instead, they recommend that we focus on the ways in which processes known as 'global' are formed by, and in turn form, the everyday local lives of individuals, and how these lives play a role in the construction of global trends. Freeman (2001: 108) suggests that such an approach allows for a rethinking of the hegemonic 'masculinist grand theories of globalization that ignore gender as an analytic lens and local empirical studies of globalization in which gender takes center stage'.

Feminist ethnographies provide alternatives to binary constructions of local and global by shedding light on the iterative nature of global and local processes. For example, Carla Freeman (2000: 36) provides a vivid illustration of worker attempts to define their work, and notes that 'informatics workers in Barbados demonstrate through a variety of practices that they are not the passive pawns of multinational capital they have sometimes been depicted to be'. She notes that women's jobs are both a source of pride and pleasure and simultaneously a source of stress and dissatisfaction. She challenges assumptions that women in the Third World are passive pawns of multinational

capital and instead focuses on the agency women enact through their work and their lives. She demonstrates that global capitalism is not monolithic, and that constructions of the 'ideal Third World worker' are both shifting and context specific. While other studies have revealed, for example, that young, childless, unmarried women constitute ideal Third World women workers, in Barbados family responsibilities are often believed to make women more committed to their jobs. Contrary to the assumption that multinationals seek a predefined flexible female labor force in the Third World, Freeman argues that ideal pools of flexible labor are actively and continuously created. Highlighting the continually contested and heterogeneous nature of global capitalism reveals the micro-processes through which transnational corporate alliances are forged and facilitated. As Freeman (2001: 1008–1009) notes, 'not only do global processes enact themselves on local ground but local processes and small scale actors might be seen as *the very fabric of globalization*'. In a similar manner, Dyck (2005: 235) documents the life histories of caregivers to show that their everyday activities are 'effects of the stretching of social, political and economic relations over space, constructed and negotiated at interlocking scales of bodies, homes, cities, regions, nations and the global'. Like Freeman, Dyck (*ibid.*: 234) uses the local as a 'methodological entry point to theorizing the operation of processes at various scales – from the body to the global'. These examples attest to the need to develop systematic methodological approaches to analyze global–local connections.

This chapter describes how we used the notion of 'mapping' to help us overcome, methodologically, the global–local divide. To illustrate how we bridge this divide, we draw on selected interview data from our study on changing garment production in Toronto between 2001 and 2005 to show ways in which owners' and workers' lives were transformed on a continuous basis by processes that were taking place not only in Toronto but globally. The study, entitled 'Changing work, changing lives: Mapping the Canadian garment industry', has two concurrent objectives. First, we wanted to discover how the garment industry has been restructured since the 1980s. Second, we wanted to document the daily experiences of garment workers in Toronto, specifically in the Chinese and South Asian communities, where many of the workers were found. To contextualize these experiences, we also looked at statistical data available from official sources (such as Industry Canada and Statistics Canada), newspapers and other popular articles, and magazines from the apparel sector. We interviewed twenty-three garment workers and ten key informants (including a merchandiser, an industry expert, a union representative, contractors, subcontractors, and small owners). Also, where possible, we attended workshops organized for contractors and industry experts to inform them of the rapid changes that might impact their work. Our discussion in this chapter focuses on our interviews with the key informants, as it is within this group that the dilemmas of capturing the global–local links were most clearly manifest. Although based on a small number of interviews,

our understanding is informed by the overall picture of garment production we were developing through different aspects of our study.

Initially, we turned to the notion of ‘mapping’ as a metaphorical device to enable us to talk about the complexity of garment production mentioned briefly above. However, as we proceeded, we found that ‘mapping’, an old concept originating in geography and revived through poststructural and postmodern feminist and education scholarship (e.g., Blunt and Rose, 1994; Paulston and Leibman, 1996; Edwards and Usher, 2001), has utility beyond serving as metaphor. Although these theorists cover different terrains and analytical subjects, what they have in common is their insight that production has to take place in real locations by real people. That is, all processes, no matter how abstract, are social in nature. As such, they can be identified – mapped.

This notion of the social relies, in turn, on the materialist conception dating back to Marx and Engels in *The German Ideology* (1970) and extended by contemporary analysts to understand changes in capitalist developments. Characterizing contemporary capitalism as ‘vagabond’ (that is, moving from place to place without a fixed home), Cindi Katz (2001: 709) nevertheless advocates a materialist approach to reframe the discussion on globalization, because she believes that capitalist reproduction can take place only through people’s material social practices. By focusing on these practices, she asserts that ‘we can better expose both the costs of globalization and the connections between vastly different sites of production’. Similarly, feminist sociologist Dorothy E. Smith (1987, 2005) developed the method of ‘institutional ethnography’ (initially) to map the social organization of women’s oppression that is applicable, and in fact central, to our explication of the global in people’s local and localized experiences. It is to this method we now turn.

To conceptualize the contradictions we witnessed in garment productions and analyze the global–local nexus, we used institutional ethnography as a guide, while relying on theoretical insights developed by other critical and feminist writers. Writing in the early 1970s, Smith was concerned to develop a sociological method that does not convert women into sociological research objects. Instead of beginning research with sociological theories and identifying a theoretical problematic, she recommends taking the everyday world as problematic *from the standpoint of women* (Smith 1986, 1987). She later indicates that her work is not confined to women; it can be taken up from the standpoint of any oppressed or marginalized group in society (Smith, 2005). We use this notion of ‘standpoint’ to understand our investigation into changes in garment production.

The notion of standpoint presupposes that there is no neutral Archimedean point on which to conduct social research and analysis. According to Ng (2006: 179), ‘the term “standpoint” is a stronger word than perspective because it indicates a political vantage point from which one views the world and identifies the “see-er” as an interested and invested knower, rather than a

disinterested, neutral and “objective” one’. Similar to other writers in feminist and critical research traditions, we believe that all researchers as well as research subjects are interested parties who view the world from a particular vantage point. Declaring our standpoint indicates clearly that we look at globalization and changes in garment production from the vantage point of garment workers in order to understand how globalizing processes affect their individual experiences. Thus, although we began with the experiences of immigrant garment women, our analysis was not simply aimed at giving voice to, or identifying the thematics of, their experiences. These experiences constitute a point of departure for interrogating what is going on that gives rise to their experiences. The question is: *how* does it happen to us/them as it does?

The standpoint of immigrant garment workers, therefore, identifies an epistemological and methodological starting point located outside of the institutional order that nevertheless shapes their experiences in profound ways. According to this method, the term ‘institutional’ does not reference an institution; rather, it identifies a complex of relations forming part of the ruling apparatus. ‘It does not only refer to a determinate form of organization, but rather to the *intersection and coordination* of more than one relational mode of the ruling apparatus’ (Smith, 1986: 8; our emphasis). That is, it draws attention to how institutionalized (in this case globalized) processes intersect and work together, albeit not always intentionally, to produce particular local effects. The term ‘ethnography’, according to Smith (*ibid.*), ‘commits us to an exploration, description and analysis of such a complex of relations, not conceived in the abstract but from the entry-point of some particular people or a particular person whose everyday world of working is organized thereby’. This approach allows us to link garment workers’ experiences to the municipal, regional, national, and indeed transnational processes that produce the local conditions of the garment industry in Toronto. In other words, this method closes the empirical and methodological gap between/among macro-, mezo-, and micro-analyses that plagues some social researchers.

When we took this approach, we began to see at least four sets of processes that constitute what we call a ‘global regime of ruling’ that produce, in part, the local conditions we saw in Toronto and elsewhere in Canada’s garment production centers (Ng, 2006). Briefly, these processes are: corporate mergers and a shifting locus of control within the industry; a shifting policy context of the Canadian state at different levels; the transnational movement of labor, including illegal migration; and trade agreements between nation-states and international bodies (such as the WTO). We use the term ‘regime’, after George Smith, to indicate that these are not accidental processes. They are planned and effected by actual people in their actual everyday activities, working toward the integration of markets, including labor markets, on a global scale. However, the impact of these global forces on local communities also depends on the extent and effectiveness of global and local protests (for details, see Ng, 2007). It is important to remember that these processes do

not proceed of their own free will; they are enacted, actualized through human activities and practices.

Working with interview accounts specifically, Liza McCoy (2006: 109) reminds researchers using this method to keep their analytical focus neither on the institution nor on the individual experience (although, of course, the latter is the point of entry), but on making ‘visible the ways the institutional [global in our study] order creates the conditions of individual experience’. In other words, our attention is focused on the *interface* between individual lives and institutional relations. The goal is to reveal how local experiences and ‘activities gear into, are called out by, shape and are shaped by, extended translocal relations of large-scale coordination (what Smith calls relations of ruling)’ (*ibid.*: 111).

McCoy’s reference to scale dovetails with reference points held by critical geographers. They provide a useful analysis of the notion of ‘scale’ that allows for an exploration of the relationship between the individual and the global. Traditionally, scale is defined as a ‘nested hierarchy of differently sized and bounded spaces’ and the local/body is seen to be nested within the global (Marston *et al.*, 2005: 416–417). Critiquing such vertical hierarchies of scale, feminist and critical geographers attempt to develop alternative notions of scale which highlight the iterative nature of local and global, and the processes of meaning-making when these terms are evoked. Specifically, these analyses evoke relational and connective notions of scale, which is conceptualized as ‘operating in a dialectical fashion, “multidirectionally and simultaneously”, “between and within” various scales’ (*ibid.*: 419). Rather than being nested within the global, the local interweaves through the global. As Doreen Massey (cited in *ibid.*) notes, ‘local places are not simply always the victims of the global; nor are they always politically defensible redoubts against the global. For places are also the moments through which the global is constituted, invented, coordinated, produced. They are “agents” in globalization.’

Revealing the global–local nexus

When we take the view that global and local are not separate nor separable, but interconnected, we not only do away with the necessity of determining an appropriate level of analysis, such as macro, mezo, or micro; more importantly, we begin to see how global processes are embedded in local experiences. Although not always explicit, these processes are available through rich descriptions provided by workers and owners, who may or may not always be conscious of this link.

By all accounts, garment workers, notably sewers, have experienced large and drastic shifts in their working conditions since the 1980s. They have been among the most directly affected by the recent growth of transnational subcontracting. Our in-depth interviews with garment workers reveal the consequences of industry shifts on individuals’ lives. Yet, although workers

live the effects of these shifts in their daily work, these larger processes are not always or immediately perceived by them as direct. Below, we have chosen Doris's (a pseudonym) story to illustrate the lack of explicit discourse of globalization (perhaps except for her reference to the quota system) in people's ordinary talk. Yet, for those of us familiar with the globalizing processes that affect garment production worldwide, her story is very much about economic globalization and how it reshaped her life and livelihood. Doris, like some of our other respondents, is interesting because she is simultaneously a sewer and an owner of a small enterprise – a worker and an employer. Her experience highlights precisely the global–local nexus we are discussing. In the interview, she repeatedly characterized her work as small, and admitted to her lack of knowledge in operating transnationally. We draw the reader's attention, in particular, to the different languages used by individuals to describe their work and public (including academic) discourses on globalization.

The story of Doris

Doris emigrated to the US and then Canada from China, where she had worked for a bank. After a futile search for a job in the US, she purchased two sewing machines and some fabric and started sewing underpants to sell to small shops. She also began importing ready-made clothes from Hong Kong. When asked how she located her customers, she said, 'Ask them one by one . . . [I] went into the shops and asked them . . . they may order the products from me if they think my products have good quality and cheap prices.' Often Doris received no payment from the shop until her underpants were purchased by consumers. She targeted small shops because 'The big shop would not do business with small suppliers like me. I also could not do business with them because they usually require a big number of underpants, which I could not make.' When she moved to Canada, she tried to obtain banking work: 'I still wanted to work in banking . . . but nobody wanted to hire me. I am not good at English speaking and I am not young so I have no advantage to work in bank.'

Doris also could not continue her import business because she did not 'know where to get the quota'. The recently abolished quota system was designed to ensure equal opportunities for all countries in the garment trade, although, as Doris's comments revealed, participating in this complex transnational trade was very difficult for an individual, independent agent. She decided not to import garments from Hong Kong because 'there are so few customers in Canada and I do not know when I can sell all them out'. Instead, she continued to supply underpants to the shops in the US with whom she had already established a relationship: 'I bought the cloth and made them all by myself . . . There are many things to do, which is very tiring. If someone wants the product, I will work in the evening. If I did not do it in this way, the customer would cancel the order because there are so many suppliers.' There was little

stability in her orders. Doris explained that there was no formal order form and her customers simply called her periodically and informed her how many pieces they wanted: 'They are all small shops. If their business is good, they will order more pieces; otherwise they order few. The smallest number was ten, and the biggest number was a little more than one hundred.' Usually it was hard to sell in the winter but easier in the summer. Doris hedged her bets by ensuring that she had many small orders rather than just a few large ones. She repeated: 'My business is very small and I do not accept big order . . . If they leave I will not lose a lot.' Every year, however, Doris would lose several hundred dollars because a customer failed to pay her. She said that she sometimes asked for help from a 'money-getting-back company' but this was not always successful. She rationalized: 'I believe they did not want to cheat my money intentionally. Their businesses were not good. If their shops closed down, all the money they owned would not be returned. My money was just a small part of it.'

When asked about how she learned the skill required to sew, Doris constructed the work as unskilled: 'Making underpants is very easy . . . I learned by watching finished underpants. Just two pieces of cloth. For underpants, there is no design. They are all similar . . . What I make is the simplest style, just two pieces of cloth – one in front and another in the back.' However, Doris made twenty different styles and when she had too much work, she hired a friend and paid her on a piece-rate basis.

Throughout the interview, Doris referred to the smallness of her business: 'because my business is very small, I need to do everything by myself . . . so it is a little busy and disorderly. Even I myself do not know what I am busy in.' She noted, 'I know the garment industry was not good in this winter and many workers were laid off and had no work to do. I do not know why . . . for me my business is small and the influence is also very small.' At the same time, she revealed that she rented a workshop for several hundred dollars a month as she did not like her customers coming to her home.

In this way, the language of the local pervades Doris's narrative – a small business with tiny profit margins engaged in small-scale production. Yet, our methodological attempts to engage in mapping reveals that her account systematically, though implicitly, points to several linkages between the global and local. Her experiences are part of the four processes which constitute the global regime of ruling mentioned earlier – labor movements, Canadian state policies, trade agreements, and a shifting locus of control within the industry. First, the fact that she could not find work in banking speaks volumes about the colonial legacy and contemporary reality of Euro-American domination: her prior work experience was not recognized in North America; she felt (and it was perceived) that her English was not 'good enough'. Second, her exclusion from her profession occurs within a broader immigration policy within which highly educated immigrants are accepted into the country on the basis of their credentials and work experience, which often fail to facilitate their entry into

professional jobs. Data reveal that a large proportion of immigrants are forced to change occupations in Canada – those employed in management or natural and applied sciences prior to immigration, for example, are likely to find jobs in sales, service, or manufacturing. Furthermore, new immigrants have a jobless rate double the national average, and half are employed in low-skilled jobs (Mirchandani, 2004). Third, although she never mentioned relations of international trade and commerce, apart from one reference to the quota system (which was put in place to curtail cheap imports from developing countries to Europe and North America, and was phased out completely in 2005 through the WTO Agreement of Textile and Clothing, of which Canada was one of the signatories), it was clear that she knew very well she could not compete with the large US and Canadian suppliers of underpants. She therefore consciously identified small, presumably local, stores, which in turn did not deal with the international garment supply chains. Finally, the instability of her income, determined by the volume of sales of the small shops to which she sold her underpants, pinpoints precisely the precarious nature of garment production and sales in a world where large retailers and manufacturers can move around easily in search of the cheapest labor force. Doris was the embodiment of sweating, where she exploited her friend's labor and was in turn exploited. Her repeated devaluation of her own skills (making underpants was 'easy') and worth (she was 'small' and had no influence) is indicative of her awareness of where she was located in the garment production hierarchy.

It is important to point out that Doris was not simply a victim of globalization. Although not her full story, our description above clearly shows her participation in globalizing processes: to survive economically, she set herself up as a small entrepreneur and chose a niche in the garment industry where she thought production would be easy. She actively pursued small retail stores to sell her underpants. She hired her friend to help out when she had too many orders to meet. Throughout her relocation to the US and Canada, she identified actively and correctly a viable economic strategy for herself and worked hard to maintain her connections in the US to preserve her business and livelihood. Doris's story displays the interactive nature of globalization; the activities of people at local sites give the abstract processes of globalization their concrete, material expression.

Indeed, our interviews with garment workers, owners, and industry experts vividly illuminate the inevitable connectedness of the global and the local. Their experiences speak to the restructuring of the garment industry in Canada, which is tied to the establishment of new norms around subcontracting and a transnational supply chain. Many of the workers reflected on how their experiences in this sector had changed over the years, from working in large, unionized plants to home-based work, as well as the detrimental effects deteriorating working conditions and decreasing wage levels had on their physical and financial health, and sense of self (Ng, 1999; Siddiqui, 2004). Their accounts demonstrate, as Mountz and Hyndman (2006: 457)

note, that ‘the labouring body functions as the most intimate site in which we experience the global’. Interestingly, for most of the workers we interviewed, like Doris, the words they used to describe their lives revealed the hesitant and reluctant ways in which they participated in the large-scale trends which have so deeply affected their lives, and which they in turn enact.

Our dilemma: an imperfect map

We began this chapter by describing the dilemma of focusing on people’s changing experience in garment production in Toronto in relation to macro-trends and -analyses. Using mapping as a conceptual and methodological lens, especially borrowing from institutional ethnography and other theorizations that dissolve the global–local binary, we came to see how global processes are embodied in local experiences. We want to end the chapter with our own dilemma.

While we have been successful in finding global processes in the narratives of garment workers and owners, we have been less successful in producing a coherent and comprehensive map of the garment industry in Canada and worldwide. This raises the ethical dilemma of how our research can concretely benefit the individuals we place at the center of our analysis – garment workers. We are unable fully to apprehend the changing contours of garment production in a way that enables us to be helpful to the participants who generously shared their stories with us, or identify concrete actions that can interrupt the global regimes of ruling within the garment sector. This may be partly because we are still experimenting with and refining our mapping skills. More likely, our imperfect attempt reflects the nature of economic globalization itself. Vagabond capitalism, to borrow Cindi Katz’s (2001) term, which characterizes this period of globalization, is itself full of contradictions and inconsistencies. By moving restlessly from locality to locality, global capitalism produces a great deal of unevenness in different places as it travels around the world in search of cheap labor and more profitable markets. In turn, the degree to which it leaves its detriments in each locality depends on a series of factors too complicated to describe here. The point is that understanding the complex, multidimensional interplay of the global and the local is beyond the scope of one single study or the capability of one (or two, in our case) researcher(s). For us, therefore, the utility of mapping goes further than its usefulness as a methodological tool. This approach points the way to research enterprises that are collaborative – between researchers and between researchers and their participants – so that people can engage in information exchange with the goal of producing more complete and comprehensive maps of how abstract global processes are played out in local places and given local expressions. The purpose of such a mapping exercise would be to enable us to see more clearly the processes, both global and local, that so profoundly shape our world and our relationships with each other.

Note

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Coming to terms

Methodological and other dilemmas in research

Kari Dehli

In this chapter I discuss two dilemmas that I encountered as I worked on, and tried to write about, a qualitative study of parental and community involvement in Toronto schools.¹ The first dilemma led me to realize that the epistemological position and conceptual tools that I had planned to use were not adequate for the complexities of the research. The second, related dilemma has to do with the difficulty of writing when positions, tools, and analytic strategies become unclear. Then, in the process of ‘working through’ these dilemmas, new ones emerge, although they may present opportunities as well as obstacles. One question that I keep returning to has to do with how tensions that arise in the conduct and representation of ethnographic and qualitative studies in education are so often lived and handled as individual dilemmas. In the conclusion of the chapter, I reflect on how such tensions might be viewed, represented, and lived differently.

To illustrate these dilemmas, I discuss how one of the women in the study on parental involvement on school councils worked to position herself within the subject position of good mother/involved parent and how she, at the same time, sought to refuse and construct alternatives to that position. Alongside this discussion, I recall my failure to produce the book that I and others expected of me from that study. How did it become so difficult to represent how parents and teachers were, or were not, working together in local school councils? As I remember and rethink these experiences years later, I cannot claim that I have finally figured out what was really going on or that I have untied the knot that stopped me from writing. Rather, I want to read these experiences in relation to two of the frames that operate as intersecting rationalities governing the conduct of education research. Both frames have influenced my thinking about qualitative research in education, although they do so in ways that generate epistemological and methodological dilemmas. The first frame is a broad and diverse set of purposes, principles, and guiding directions, explicitly stated or implicitly assumed, in qualitative or ethnographic research conducted from critical or feminist perspectives. While they differ in many other ways, many feminist and critical ethnographers of education share a broad commitment to a program of social justice, where

research can uncover what is actually going on in schools, determining the interests that shape or direct decisions, or analyzing the everyday experiences and cultures of teachers or students. This knowledge, when brought to light, will help address relations of domination, lack of recognition, and problems of school failure. The task of the critical ethnographer is to represent, as best she can, the rich complexities of the lives of people she studies. The most convincing studies speak with confidence about the meaning and implications of what the researcher observed. For a number of years this broad frame has been an important part of my orientation to education research, providing a rationale for my own research and the studies undertaken by students I teach and supervise.

The second, emergent frame is drawn from governmentality studies (Foucault, 1991), and it is one that disrupts the first. It does not take 'the reality' of schools or the intentions of individuals within them as objects of analysis. Rather, in this frame, the concern is to trace the terms in which such realities and intentions are constituted and naturalized. Thus, the focus here is not the specificity of individuals and the meanings they attribute to their experiences and actions. Instead, the researcher's task is to uncover the complexity of talk and text, wherein individuals are both constituted as particular subjects and constitutive of the realities and subject-positions that they inhabit (Davies, 2000). And, as I will discuss, one task is to tease out how some subject-positions are neither desirable nor equally available, or can only be temporarily and tenuously inhabited (Walkerdine, 2006).

As I recall my experience from the study of 'parental involvement' and my attempts to write about it, I find myself located somewhere between these two frames, a location that leads to new dilemmas and possible openings. I conclude the chapter with the proposition that qualitative researchers, no matter how committed we are to critical practices and emancipatory politics, are implicated in practices of power, whose dimensions and effects we cannot completely grasp. Thus, while dilemmas might be managed, at times quite convincingly, the kinds of dilemmas I discuss here can never be resolved once and for all. At the same time, and this is the hopeful part, to notice that dilemmas are integral to, or comprise slippages in, practices of government might open up spaces for doing research and being researchers differently. In this sense, dilemmas are surfaces where the instability of researchers' implications in relations of power can be made visible, and where we can retrieve creative possibilities for new connections and practices that can take us beyond internalized immobilities.² At least for a time . . .

A study of school councils in Toronto

In the mid-1990s, the provincial government in Ontario introduced legislation that required every publicly funded school to establish a local school council, on which parents of children attending the school would be represented. Over

a period of two years, I and a team of graduate students observed countless meetings of the local school councils, we interviewed teachers, principals, and parents, and we collected a wide array of documents. Many of the meetings we attended were frankly boring, while others were contentious and confusing, in some ways reflecting an intensely ideological period in Ontario education. During the second year of the project, all of Ontario's teachers were on strike for two weeks to protest government legislation. The schools where we conducted our research were closed, as were all the other publicly funded schools in the province, and we followed them, and some of the parents we had come to know, on to the picket lines.

The study was funded with a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, allowing me to recruit three graduate students as research assistants.³ Following the procedures suggested in protocols and ethical reviews governing school-based research, I had contacted the research offices of two urban school boards, and presented them with a detailed proposal in which I explained the purposes, questions, and approaches of the study. Taking some time to become familiar with several schools, I approached four principals to ask for permission to 'sit in' on school advisory councils in their school. While some had reservations about being evaluated, and some had questions about qualitative research, we were welcomed quite readily into the schools. Even at this initial stage, the graduate students and I talked about how each school 'felt' different, and how each seemed to position us, as researchers, in distinct ways. In one school, the principal appeared to assume the authority to act as gatekeeper, simply announcing to the council that 'researchers from OISE' would be conducting 'a study of how well we are doing with the council'. In another, I met with the parent chair of the council, as well as the principal, to discuss whether, and on what terms, we would be granted access to their meetings. Only after we made a detailed presentation and the group had a lengthy discussion were we given the go-ahead.

The graduate students and I assigned ourselves each to a school, although I would also attend council meetings or other events in 'their' schools from time to time. We were not present in the buildings during the school day, nor were we there every day, and yet the study resembled many school ethnographies. For the better part of two years we sat in on meetings between parents, teachers, and principals, we attended school concerts and barbecues, and we conducted interviews. Two of the graduate students volunteered to help with a weekly breakfast program in one school, and this experience provided interesting insights into the lives of students and families. As the project unfolded and we became more familiar to the people we were observing and interviewing, our relations with them began to change. In many ways, they became easier and friendlier, as people would greet us by our first names, ask for our opinions on issues, and chat about everyday matters before or after meetings. In other respects, they were more complicated. As some of the participants confided in us, we could see conflicts that were not visible at the

level of superficial friendliness. On a couple of occasions, important information about something that was about to happen in the school was divulged to one of us by a teacher or principal, but not to parents on the school council. In one case, one of the graduate students found herself in a difficult dilemma when the principal of 'her' school told her that the premier of the province, Mike Harris, would be visiting the school to hand over a check of a few thousand dollars to support the breakfast program. As far as she could determine, the principal was uncomfortable that the school would provide a backdrop for a political photo-op for an extremely unpopular politician who had just announced huge cuts in the education budget. Was she telling us so that we, the researchers, would leak the information to the teachers' union? Was she inviting the graduate student as a confidante into a rare moment of political intrigue in the school? Did she seek approval?

While many ethnographic studies of schools focus either on teachers or students, or select particular sites such as classrooms or corridors (Acker, 1999; Willis, 1977; Yon, 2000; Gonick, 2003; Anyon, 1980), this research was concerned with relations between school staff and parents as they worked out how to organize and implement local school councils. In many ways, the study could be situated in relation to recent research on parental involvement, school choice, and marketization (Lareau, 2000; Deem *et al.*, 1995; Crozier, 2000; Gewirtz *et al.*, 1995; David, 1993; Vincent, 2000). Like these researchers, I was interested in whether and how relations of class, race, and gender were reproduced or challenged in the spaces that were made available for parental involvement. Perhaps unlike them, as we moved from observation and participation to reading and organizing transcripts and documents, and starting to write, I became less confident in what we were observing and hearing, or how to assign individuals and groups to such abstract social categories. In some of the schools where we were doing research, parents and community activists worked hard to develop and assert positions on a range of questions, while parent and community representatives elsewhere seemed happy to assume the role of supporters and helpers for teachers. Tracing out the class or race 'interest' in such positions was less than obvious, even though this particular project was conducted at a time when Ontario schools were consumed in intense ideological struggle and heavy-handed government initiatives to restructure the governance, funding, curriculum, and labor relations of schools (Gidney, 1999). Thus, while many of the individuals in the study held strong and contradictory views about what was right and wrong about education in general, and about the particular school where they taught or participated as parents, the analytical strategies I thought would make sense started falling apart.

As the research wound down and the analysis and writing were meant to begin, I found myself mired in confusing data and wildly conflicting stories. On one reading, it seemed that teachers, administrators, parents, and students – and researchers – struggled to make sense of a very unsettling time. Viewed

from one angle, there was a clear-cut struggle between a neo-conservative (or neo-liberal?) government intent on introducing a mix of market principles and central controls in education, and, opposing it, a coalition of teachers and parents struggling to maintain quality public education. However, this general binary frame could not capture the way some historically marginalized groups endorsed the move toward a more standardized curriculum, reporting, and tests, except by characterizing them as misguided or ill-informed. Nor, as it turned out, was this frame of much use to me as I sought to represent the micro-politics of this time in particular schools. I drafted and presented several conference papers, as did the students working on the study, but no matter what I wrote, the stories seemed either too flat and one-dimensional or the analysis seemed to misrepresent someone or overstate something. I was stuck in wanting to respect everyone, and to receive their respect in return, a space where desires for innocence and recognition were at odds with conflicting loyalties and, as I will discuss, competing epistemological commitments.

A few papers were presented and published (students presenting at the American Educational Research Association; Dehli and Fumia, in press; Dehli, 2003, 2004), but the book-length manuscript I hoped to write remains as unfinished chapter drafts and has not been completed. I could and did attribute this failure to competing expectations, a heavy workload, student supervision, teaching, administrative duties, and so on. More personally, however, I was distressed about my inability to write about the competing and intensely felt views regarding what was going on in the schools. I seemed unable to represent either the messy relations of power and evasion or the boredom and absence of engagement that seemed to beset school advisory councils. I felt the dilemma as one where I could not resolve how to write ethically and convincingly in a space of conflict between parent activists who felt excluded from the school (and often patronized by teachers) and teachers and administrators who worked hard and felt they were vilified and unfairly attacked by (some of) the parents. Moreover, even this kind of representation was complicated by the presence of multiple relations and identifications that we observed, and by the ways in which individuals would 'take up' inconsistent or ambivalent positions. This applied to me as well. The feeling I had, and still have, was somewhere between indecision and lack of courage to take the risk of writing, to stake a position and to be accountable for it.

Becoming a subject at school and in research

To provide one illustration of some of these dilemmas, I now turn to one of the 'participants' in the study, Adele.⁴ Over the two years in which I took part in meetings and community events at Bridgeview Elementary School, I had numerous conversations with Adele. She was a self-described feminist and anti-racist activist and we would often chat before and after school council meetings. On occasion, I would give her a ride home, a few blocks from the

school. During these conversations and in two formal interviews, we would share our observations about education and the social relations in this particular school. Here I want to recall the complicated ways in which Adele worked to situate herself in relation to the discourses of the good mother and involved parent made available through participation on the local school council. I will then provide two possible readings of these observations and discuss how questions and assumptions in different research frames generate different accounts.

Over the course of numerous meetings, Adele moved from being a reluctant and quiet observer to a vocal participant and critical advocate. In conversations and interviews, she commented on several occasions that when she was first asked to join the council she said no. Yet, she was soon persuaded. After a few months she began to make articulate, knowledgeable, and strategic interventions. She also seemed to defy teachers' expectations of the good parent who seeks collaboration with teachers and submits to their expertise. Indeed, on a number of occasions she would correct a teacher's suggestion, or question its basis. At the same time, Adele could not be categorized as a 'difficult' and 'single-issue' parent who pursues the interests of her own child with little regard for teachers or other children. Indeed, at one point, she declined the opportunity to remove her son from the class of a teacher who had earned a dubious reputation among parents and children for her apparent inability to 'manage the class'. Also marking Adele as different from other mothers was that she would publicly address what others would only discuss in the privacy of interviews – that race and class were central issues in the school. This candor caused both white and black teachers, and some parents, to respond defensively to Adele, while other parents appeared relieved that someone else had identified what they also took to be true.

As I have suggested, this study was conducted during a period of political struggle around education in Ontario. The teacher unions became targets of several of the government's attempts to 'restructure' schools; in response, the unions formed a well-organized political adversary, perhaps the only group capable of mobilizing significant resistance to what many perceived as an ideological attack on public education. In October 1997, the unions called all of their members to strike and more than 120,000 teachers left their classrooms to stand on picket lines. In many schools, the newly formed school councils were unsure how to respond, but at Bridgeview the council was firmly 'on side' with the teachers. Adele was one of the most active supporters, bringing her son to the picket lines, helping to organize information for other parents, and attending rallies against the government. Following the strike, which ended when the teachers returned to school without gaining concessions on any of the issues, many teachers (and parents) felt demoralized. Yet, for a time at Bridgeview, there seemed to be a feeling of camaraderie among the teachers and parents, as they recalled events during the strike. A few teachers confided to me that they were frankly surprised at the support they received from the

council. But the feeling of solidarity, if that is indeed what it was, did not last. By the February 1998 council meeting, there was a lot of tension. At one point in that meeting, Adele challenged the vice-principal to agree that one of the school's main problems was a lack of expectations of working-class and black students. After a long and defensive response, and assertions from teachers that the school was an excellent place of learning for all of its students, Adele looked in vain to other parents for support. They seemed uncomfortable and someone eventually changed the topic.

A few days later, we talked over tea in Adele's kitchen. I had arranged to interview her about her participation on the council. I asked her how she was feeling about comments that she had made and the response she had received. As she talked, her anger and sense of betrayal were still quite palpable:

You know, this is what I can't stand . . . I mean, the only person who actually said to me after that meeting . . . came up to me and said, you know, 'It's unfortunate that you had to take on this alone, but, you know, good for you for saying it, it's about time somebody says it' was Amira. Amira always feels that she's not acknowledged, not even by other black women, which is true. There's also a class division among us and, I mean, there are women of color in our group who tend to, who separate themselves, I mean, who tend to separate themselves based on class, in terms of not talking about racism, not talking about class.

In Adele's opinion, Bridgeview was 'one of the schools that clearly falls below the scale in terms of school rank in Toronto now'. While she was initially reluctant to join the council, she felt it important to help bring the school her son attended 'up to the rank'. Later in the interview we talked about the purpose of school councils and how she saw them in relation to teachers. Adele was angry about the teachers' reactions to her suggestions in the previous meeting:

I do not want to be seen . . . I do not want this group to be a group of teachers. They have the union. Yes, we are supportive of public education in principle, because it's about a larger political issue here. I do not want to continue in this path where we are always not able to confront the teachers if there is a need to be . . . a particular issue to be confronted. And the teachers are going to fight us if we decide that we suggest that there's something that needs to happen . . . I'm sure they're going to put up a fight on this if we start pushing this, which I hope that we do . . . They're going to start reacting in the way they've always reacted, which is: 'You don't tell us what to do. You support us and you support us, and that's the extent of the relationship. You don't challenge us. You don't confront us. You don't tell us what you need. We tell you what you need, and what we can give you. You don't tell us.' And that's what's happening.

We had our tea and talked about what was going on in her workplace before the conversation turned to her son and how he was doing at school. Her tone seemed to change, sounding anxious as she confessed that she often doubted her role on the council, and worried that her outspoken activism there could have repercussions for her son. And yet, she defied the role of mother as 'willing helper of teachers'. She recalled how, when her son had previously attended an almost all white and middle-class school, she was viewed as an inadequate mother.

I will not do a bake sale or a rummage sale. I'll do other things, but not a bake sale or a rummage sale . . . And of course you were looked upon very negatively if you didn't do this stuff. So, I was always looked upon like really not a very good mother. A lot of it was based on the fact that I was a black mother. And there were all kinds of stereotypes of that. They were expecting me to do what mothers should do in order to measure up, which was to be at bake sales . . . go on outings with the kids. I don't have time. I work. That's not my priority, you know, to do this stuff.

There are several ways to analyze these observations and short interview excerpts, some that would aim to represent these snippets of conversation as closely as possible to the terms in which Adele would understand them, some that would reorganize her talk to illustrate sociological concepts and categories, and yet others that would look for linguistic patterns or discursive organization in the excerpts (for critique, see DeVault, 1999). In the next two sections, I discuss the two possible readings with which I worked in my attempts to make sense of Adele's talk, and what I thought she represented in the field of school and parental involvement. I then link these to some reflections on my inability to conclude this study by writing about it. In that section, I show how methodological dilemmas relating to analytical and political choices come to be lived, by the researcher, as private problems and, in this case, as personal failure. At the same time, the sense of unease, undecidability, and lack of clarity might provide new perspectives on the relations and discourses that organize education and education research, thus providing a way forward, if not a secure route out of, these particular dilemmas.

Reading through critical and feminist ethnography

While there are important differences between them, in this chapter I discuss critical and feminist ethnography together in the sense that they are positioned in shared discourses of education, particularly in so far as they identify with emancipatory perspectives and concern themselves with relations of power. Not all critical ethnographies of education are feminist; indeed some of the latter were conducted and written as critiques of how the former took gender for granted or failed to notice gender as an important feature of schooling.

Howard Becker (1983) has argued that critical researchers, and particularly those who want to conduct qualitative and ethnographic research, have to work hard to gain entry into schools, and to maintain relationships with teachers, administrators, and students. Rhetorically, he asks why educators should welcome researchers who intend to cast their critical and judgemental gaze on everyone and everything in the school. No matter how good the teacher or the school, these researchers are bound to find flaws and to write about them. In Becker's narrative of the impossible gap between ethnography and schooling, he argues that schools will always resist such research because they sense that ethnographers will see and reveal the secret of schools' inequality and failure. While psychology and schools can work hand in hand, since psychologists attempt to identify failure in the students (or their parents, communities, or cultures), good ethnographers are troublesome, because their observations will also include teachers, administrators, and institutional structures. By hanging around and talking to people they will notice the many ways in which well-intentioned people reproduce social and educational inequality.

These kinds of accounts of critical research on schools are, of course, overdrawn here to make a point. The fact that I particularly want to draw out is how this broad frame provides a moral tale whose binary structure is seductively simple. The attractiveness of this narrative for me as a researcher of parental involvement on school councils had in part to do with the relatively comfortable position that it offered to 'the critical and feminist researcher'. From this position, it was possible to rationalize and simplify the complicated relations in which I was enmeshed, without feeling that I was contributing to the maintenance of those relations. Indeed, one of the persuasive structures at work here is the story of ethnographer as critical outsider, a storyline where the researcher can position herself through a process of identification with those who are marginalized in schools, a speaking position that appears to bring together epistemological clarity, political commitment, and ethical responsibility. In this particular study, however, this positioning was not so readily available, at least not to me; nor could I get a ready handle on who inhabited the margins.

I was initially drawn to critical ethnographies that assume, and focus on, inherent conflicts between the aims and strategies of ethnography and the aims and strategies of schooling (Becker, 1983). Critical scholars in education have produced numerous accounts of how teachers and administrators reproduce relations of power and inequality through schooling, often in spite of their intentions (Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Anyon, 1980; Willis, 1977), but I also read the work of other qualitative researchers of education who have generated contrasting accounts of teachers, conveying deep respect for the difficult work that they do (Acker, 1999; Delamont, 1983). These, too, made sense to me, and their accounts resembled many of the teachers we had observed. Unlike Acker, however, we were not able to peer into 'the real world'

of teachers and teaching, since our study was about another space and another set of relations, between parents and schools.

Were I to take up a position as critical and feminist ethnographer in writing about moments and conversations like the ones I have described above, I might foreground Adele's sense of agency and her well-articulated political analysis. As a feminist researcher, I identified with many of her critical observations, and it would be quite possible to represent Adele's interventions and critiques as moments of resistance. Thus, I respected her courage to speak her mind in spaces that were not always receptive to her views. At the same time, Adele's attempt to negotiate her relation to teachers and other parents does not completely fit a coherent tale of resistance. To be sure, she was critical of schools and teachers, yet her relation to her son, her race, and her class, and her undisclosed sexuality, complicated this picture. As I wrestled with how to write, I was concerned that I would not be able to represent the complexity of her attempts to position herself, and particularly that I could not adequately convey how racism and racialization shaped Adele's experiences and reception in the school.

However, I came to wonder why I turned to foreground a critical voice such as Adele's, when so many other mothers were quiet. Was I attracted to her sense of agency in ways that obscured the relative isolation of her position, while allowing me to locate myself as a critical outsider in relation to the school and to teachers? In one sense, using Adele as the figure that would 'speak for' parents would add injury to teachers' sense of self at a time when they were subjected to relentless ideological attacks by the government. Although they were under a great deal of stress, teachers and principals had welcomed us into the schools, they had taken time with us and had responded to our questions, most often with grace and patience. In interviews, though rarely in public, many had been quite open about their skepticism regarding school councils. Some expressed fears that teachers would feel most of the effects of policies mandating parental involvement. While some welcomed the formal recognition of parents' work, others were anxious about increased surveillance and unreasonable expectations, or they worried that 'most parents' would not be interested, thus allowing 'a few' to speak as if they represented a majority.

In this study, we encountered contradictory stories, firmly held positions, criticism on the part of parents, and suspicion and defensiveness on the part of teachers. Many of the administrators and teachers we talked to would likely have objected to what I wanted to write. Many of the parent activists would be disappointed, too, although it is equally possible that few of the people we encountered would care what we wrote, beyond a bemused interest in being part of a study. Much of the time I was not at all sure what to write; nor could I see what kind of sense could be made of our observation. What if the subjects of our ethnographic stories were not as transparent and rational as critical ethnographies would assume? Some of the time, there seemed to be very little if anything worth noting in meetings that we observed. Could the narrative

be one where boredom was the central theme? Isn't it the ethnographer's task to craft stories from 'the field' that are not only truthful but engaging and interesting? In contrast to Acker's (1999) ethnography of teachers' work in two primary schools in England, I sometimes felt that there were many 'dull moments' in our research into school council meetings. It could be that the 'real' and most interesting work of the schools was hidden from our view, and that teachers were careful to shield their classroom work and staffroom talk from both researchers and the parents attending school council meetings. Add parents and communities into the mix and the picture is messier still.

Becker's (1983) confident and masculine story of school ethnography offers little room for, or acknowledgement of, researchers' doubts about what they see, nor the possibility that schools are complicated and confusing sites for teachers, as well as for students. I am beginning to think that the binary around which Becker's story is organized may be an obstacle to gaining a more nuanced picture of research and education as incomplete, unpredictable, and unstable practices. For many researchers, this instability and incompleteness are lived as individual and personal conflict, tension, failure, and frustration (Walkerdine, 2006), emotions that appear completely absent from Becker's account. While it might be comforting to position ourselves, as ethnographers, on the side of truth, I have read enough Foucault to be suspicious of my desire for, and investment in, such a position. At the same time, the lack of clarity and the instability of lines of analysis translated, in this study, into confused and incomplete writing. While Becker's assertive narrative might satisfy (some) political desires, it would have done so at the cost of obscuring how difference cuts through and disorganizes political divisions and identifications. A more feminist account, one that pays attention to these kinds of nuance, might come closer to representing, and identifying with, the everyday negotiations and challenges that teachers, students, and parents must handle. In both cases, however, the categories that organize the relations within and representation of schooling – such as parent, teacher, or student – are left unexamined. Obscured, as well, are the complicated ways in which differently situated individuals attempt to take up, appropriate, rework, or refuse such categories, or the ways that some individuals are not recognized as appropriate to the subject-positions that are normalized in the daily work of schooling and in many critical research accounts (Walkerdine, 1990). I will now turn to some of the ways in which researchers, including critical and feminist ethnographers, participate in the production of 'governing' discourses that shape education.

Neo-liberal governmentality in education and research

In contrast to most ethnographies of education, governmentality studies do not take institutions like schools as their objects of analysis; nor do they focus on individuals as the source of meaning. Rather, in the case of studies

of education reform, for example, they invite questions about how – in addition to its enactment in legislation and its capacity to direct the efforts of teachers, parents, students, and researchers – ‘reform’ also operates through self-reflexive practices and what Adkins and Lury (1999) call ‘labour of identity’ (see also Dehli and Fumia, in press).

By creating conditions that enable and require forms of community and local responsibility, along with individual enterprise and freedom, contemporary forms of government are said mainly to operate ‘at a distance’ (Dean, 1999; Hay, 2003). In neo-liberal or advanced liberal regimes of power, individuals are both encouraged and obliged to act, to participate in social and community affairs, while at the same time securing their own welfare. Thus, the freedom to participate in spaces such as local schools is also a duty, whereby individuals and communities are made responsible for ‘their’ sphere of action, for ‘their’ health and well-being, as though the conditions and problems of contemporary living are contained within the individual and the local (Dehli, 2004). Similar regimes of power are evident in universities where students and professors are expected to assume an entrepreneurial stance in relation to their work and their scholarly selves, seeking out research funding and scholarships, recruiting graduate students, and generating publications. In the educational contexts that interest me here, neo-liberal government is effective to the extent that individuals in local school communities and universities come to understand themselves as the types of subjects that are identified in contemporary discourses of government. While the critical and realist account of school ethnography, for which I took Becker (1983) to be a representative, provides a clearly divided and internally coherent set of roles for researchers and educators to assume, neo-liberal ‘rationalities’ are heterogeneous, multiple, unstable, and inconsistent. Here, there are few, if any, positions where the researcher can speak confidently or innocently in her identifications with those who have been excluded and injured through their experiences of schooling.

I want to work with some of Foucault’s (1991) discussion about transformations in modes and targets of government to rethink the knot of my ‘failure’ to be productive and Adele’s ‘failed’ negotiations of good mother/involved parent. The emphasis in much critical sociology of education is on the ideological content and interests that are said to drive and benefit from particular policies, curricula, or social relations of schools (Anyon, 1980; Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Giroux, 1983; David, 1993); the focus and object of governmentality studies are quite different. First, these studies are rarely realist sociologies; nor are they concerned with what specific individual social actors are doing, or how they experience and respond to their circumstance (O’Malley *et al.*, 1997). On the rare occasions when social actors do appear, they do so not as particular individuals, but as experts, planners, and policy-makers who are working out problems of governing and who speak and write by virtue of the positions they occupy. Second, then, the governmentality

literature tends to be focused, at a fairly general level, on the 'rationalities' or modes of thought through which questions or problems of government are apprehended and worked out, or on the seemingly neutral means, terms, and practices whereby such 'problems' are identified and acted upon (*ibid.*). Their objects of analysis are the general knowledges and technologies that organize contemporary power, often in indirect ways, rather than actual individuals who are doing and intending things, or the meanings that they attach to what they do.

At one level, then, governmentality studies are at odds with realist sociologies, whether critical or feminist (or both), and it might therefore constitute another dilemma to 'import' governmentality studies into reflections about methodological dilemmas remembered from a school ethnography. I will not dwell on this as a dilemma here (others have: see Baker and Heyning, 2004; Tamboukou and Ball, 2003), except to suggest that my aim is not to use 'governmentality' to produce a more accurate story than my earlier readings. Instead, I am interested in governmentality studies because they direct us toward the conditions that shape thinking and doing, the terms through which we come to know ourselves as this or that kind of subject, and because they are interested in how governing works not only 'on' but 'through' individuals. In particular, one strand of governmentality studies has been concerned to trace the privatization of social problems and the proliferation of practices that recruit and compel individuals into practices of self-management and self-improvement (Cruikshank, 1999; King, 2003). During and following the study on school councils, I began to see how schools and universities are among the spheres where these trends can be observed, where discourses of local, community, and individual responsibility are endemic, and where a wide range of practices encourage and compel teachers, students, administrators, and parents to be active, engaged, enterprising, and responsible (Ball, 2000; Gewirtz *et al.*, 1995; Dehli, 2004).

Foucault's writing provides conceptual and methodological resources for thinking about these questions and the dilemma I have outlined. At the same time, taking up his 'tools' spawns new dilemmas in relation to qualitative and ethnographic research, in so far as his concerns were far removed from the kinds of setting that we observed or the kinds of conversation I wanted to analyze. Foucault's archaeologies and genealogies take knowledge and power as their objects and challenge approaches that take the autonomous and rational human subject as the source of meaning. Rather, he sought to historicize the emergence of the meaning-giving subject as the source of knowledge and truth, and to question how this subject has come to seem natural and normal. Thus, he described the purpose of his work as an effort to 'create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subject' (Foucault, 1982: 208–209). In particular, he traced the way human sciences and modern political discourses in Western Europe produced the modern, bourgeois subject as their effect. And, as I have suggested, he was not exploring

this question in the particular lives of individual subjects, as an ethnographer might. Rather, in a series of historical studies, he traced 'the processes that shift the meaning of being subject over time' (Davies, 2000: 134).

Analyzing the study we conducted through questions from Foucault and others' work on governmentality could attend to how matters such as personal conduct, dispositions, and habits are identified as objects of knowledge and subjected to ever more detailed regulation. One question that could be asked is how 'the parent' emerged as a key category of education discourse in the West at the end of the twentieth century. Another might inquire about the specific technologies through which 'the parent' is constituted in relation to schooling. A third could trace the effects of this 'new' subject at the level of particular schools and families. In the conversations with Adele, one analytic strategy here might be to ask how she makes use of, and positions herself in relation to, several contemporary discourses of education, participation, feminism, and anti-racism. Thus, her assertion that the school her son attends does not 'reach the scale', when compared to other schools, is a statement that comes to be 'true' within a particular discourse of school improvement, standards, and reform. At the same time, she identifies with a political analysis of schooling and teachers that in one moment aligns with teachers' attempts to defend public education against attacks by a neo-conservative government, while in another statement she positions herself as speaking on behalf of parents and families more marginal than herself in opposition to teachers.

There were also moments in the study, in formal interviews and informal conversations, when participants would share what appeared to be secrets about themselves or about others. In these 'confessional' moments, there were both self-critique and self-reflection at work, where government can be viewed in Foucault's (1991) sense as self-government. As Adele works through her ambivalent relation to the 'good mother' subject-position, she produces a complex analysis and self-understanding. She may decline the positions of teacher and good mother – she will not do bake sales – but she also constitutes herself as someone with a sophisticated knowledge of education and a great deal of experience as an anti-racist and feminist activist. One could read this as a refusal of the terms that frame normative notions of mother and parent, while searching for alternative terms that can provide a more politicized position as working mother, someone who is 'too busy to do that stuff'.

In analytics of government, attention is directed toward the 'rationalities' and 'technologies' of contemporary government by which individuals, families, and local communities are enlisted to become active, 'empowered', free and responsible citizens. A number of governmentality studies focus on particular sites where the freedom, or obligation, to be engaged are manifest, such as in local or cultural communities (Rose, 1996), in self-help programs (Cruikshank, 1999), Alcoholics Anonymous (Valverde, 2004), or schooling (Popkewitz and Brennan, 1998; Baker and Heyning, 2004). Other studies focus on consumption and media as sites of neo-liberal self-government (Poster, 2004;

Bratich *et al.*, 2003; Miller, 1993). A few studies have analyzed how relations and identities of gender and race are being rearticulated and recomposed in forms of government that take the local and the community as their target and position the responsible citizen as their preferred subject (Dehli, 2004; Taylor and Vintges, 2004).

The notion of governmentality draws attention to the techniques and practices by which governing is organized and accomplished, as well as the rationalities or knowledges through which government is thought into being in programmatic form (Foucault, 1991; Rose and Miller, 1992). By focusing at a very general level of 'mentalities of rule' (O'Malley *et al.*, 1997) while at the same time detailing some of the local and specific techniques of government and self-government that characterize the early twenty-first century, governmentality allows us to think about how power is exercised in and through education, and the ways we take ourselves up as different kinds of subjects in relation to education and research. In contrast to sovereign and disciplinary power, governmental forms of power operate indirectly by shaping general conditions and capacities for conduct, 'particularly individuals' exercise of freedom, self-reflection and self-improvement' (Dehli and Fumia, in press). While accounts of power and resistance that operate critical ethnography are structured as binaries, as matters of limit and constraint and struggles to realize freedom, governmentality studies depict freedom 'as an array of competencies that are ascribed to different agents and can only be realized in relation to specific conditions of possibility' (Barnett, 1999: 383). Freedom and agency are simultaneously the 'condition of possibility' of power and its 'effects' (Foucault, 1991; Rose, 1996; Hall, 1996).

A further dilemma . . .

One of the dilemmas that an entanglement with Foucault presents is the recognition that there is no space for researchers to inhabit beyond relations of power. The social researcher is inescapably enmeshed in the social world that she studies and about which she writes, and the promise of distance offered by modernist social science, be it as a stance of objectivity in positivism or of critical reflection in ethnography, is at best conditional, and at worst suspect and dangerous (Tamboukou and Ball, 2003: 11–12; Skeggs, 2002). Foucault's genealogical writing presumes and effects a different kind of skeptical distance. Here, there is a mode of questioning that brings into view precisely those habits of thought that go unnoticed as we go about everyday life. Some form of epistemological distance seems to be required in order to adopt the skeptical vision of genealogy; without distance we are unable to see the conditions and terms that shape the organization and norms that enable the social to assume an organized form at all. Foucault recommends a questioning that 'problematizes' the terms in which we think and know ourselves, our being as well as our doing. By insisting that truths and norms are historically contingent, he

encouraged and modeled a skeptical analytic in his own historical and social inquiry.

Foucault's writing on governmentality allows me to think about methodological paradoxes, dilemmas, and contradictions in research as socially and discursively constituted conditions that are lived as if they are internal to individuals, a matter of capacity, knowledge, skill or intelligence, yet he does not offer an easy way out of the dilemmas I have discussed here. One possibility that I have considered is to suggest that methodology itself can be viewed as a form of governmentality: that is, as a particular form of power/knowledge. The everyday doing of research and representation of inquiry can be seen as a set of regulations to be adopted by active subjects, and as a set of performances to be recognized or ignored within discursive economies containing both possibilities and constraint. Debates about methodology, as well as teaching and supervising students who are learning to become competent in methods, operate in governmental ways. By tracing some of the governing functions of methodology and methods, we might discern their operation and effects as a discourse that is produced and that circulates and is used, adapted or contested in a variety of sites – pedagogical, fiscal, ethical, cultural, and administrative. In the processes, methodology and methods provide resources, rules, and regulations for the production of populations and subjects.

Schematically, papers and publications, conferences and scholarly meetings, course curricula, textbooks, and edited collections like this one assemble and circulate questions, modes of thinking, orientations to problems, and interventions in education. In so doing, we participate in conceiving and 'making up' populations and individuals, identifying problems in need of government, and specifying terms that define the priorities, boundaries, and justifications (Popkewitz, 1998). In this sense, methodological rationality organizes what can be thought in methodological terms, and how such terms can be asserted, attacked, defended, or modified. At the same time, methodology talk and writing are about identifying efficient and good conduct on the part of those who are becoming competent in terms of a particular methodology; they are about techniques and procedures for producing, organizing, representing, and communicating knowledge. Methodology writing and teaching are also about producing and organizing subjects and about specifying the ways in which individuals are to take themselves up, and recognize others as belonging to subject-positions in methodological regimes. In this sense, teaching about and supervising students in methodology are about generating experts who can be trusted to produce truth according to authorized rules and transparent procedures.

Conclusions

There are numerous dilemmas in research – ethical, moral, theoretical, political, cultural, institutional, and so on. At a time when the regulation

of research is being politicized, and when the boundaries of what counts as research in education are being tightened (Dehli and Taylor, 2006), questioning the terms in which research dilemmas are discussed as matters of methodology is particularly imperative for those of us who conduct qualitative and critical research in education, or who depart from and deconstruct the assumptions of realist sociology and policy-oriented research currently favored by governments and funders. To the extent that it constructs, on the one hand, a set of concepts and theories that rationalize the questions asked and assumptions made by researchers, and, on the other, a set of procedures and techniques for going about the doing of research, methodology can be viewed as a form of governmentality. Much like analytics of government in other spheres, methodology can be decomposed into its 'rules of reason' (Popkewitz, 1998) and its technologies and practices (Tamboukou and Ball, 2003). In ways that may be quite similar to other contemporary forms of government, methodological governmentality invites devolved decision-making, individual participation, and responsibility, encouraging subjects who are active, rational, and enterprising. At the same time, where it is embedded in the work of schools, universities, and graduate education, methodology is integrated in, and governed through, myriad administrative routines and performative expectations, as well as what appears like an increasing preoccupation with surveillance of researchers' conduct (Strathern, 2000).

I have explored moments of failure as sites of slippage, or times when we might 'catch ourselves' in not quite fitting into expected norms of conduct (Davies, 2000). These might be moments when we encounter and 'take up' new identities, or they may be momentary (or ongoing) attempts to avoid identities that are on offer: for example, the good mother/involved parent, or the entrepreneurial researcher.

Notes

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- 2 I am grateful to Kathleen Gallagher for this insight.
- 3 The students were Ann Bradbury, Doreen Fumia, and Karyn Sandlos. They were an amazing research team – smart, curious, engaged, and critical. I deeply appreciate the insights and the energy they brought to the study.
- 4 The names of the school and individuals are pseudonyms.

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The art of methodology

A collaborative science

Kathleen Gallagher

Since antiquity, there has been what we might call an artificial bifurcation of art and science. In this chapter, I intend to develop an argument and explore productive and participatory research methods to further a dialectical interchange between what often appear to be the imperatives of science and the creative impulses of art. Wrestling with dilemmas of methodology has provided me with some of the greatest sources of clarity in this ongoing quest to resist the facile binaries of thought and action that such epistemologies require. I shall take the opportunity, in this chapter, to use my recently completed ethnographic study of four schools in New York City and Toronto to interpret various embodied methodological maneuvers we¹ made that resisted a political and educational context that so clearly privileges the 'scientific', presumed to be the 'objective' and the 'distanced'. When research in the 'human' sciences is conceived as a series of moments, performances, creative encounters, and temporal relationships that can never be repeated, rather than a series of value-free and distanced observations, the research encounter itself cannot help but challenge some of the traditional questions about the nature of truth, the power relations of knowledge, and the politics and ethics of the 'human sciences'.² Differences of epistemology and method in qualitative research eerily echo the larger cultural schism between science and art, which might also be characterized by the tension between standing apart and being fully involved.

I should like to clarify, however, what I mean, or perhaps what I do not mean, by being 'fully involved'. Having contextual sensitivity and using arts methods as a sense-making optic in research do not mean that one acts as a kind of artistic director, with a particular set of structures to order the environment in which one is working. Using theater, as we did, to reframe the research context often meant positioning the researcher as 'doer' rather than 'observer'. And as a 'doer', you run the risk or gain the benefit of being in an area of not knowing how it is you know something. In this way, non-interpretation of a context, biding one's time, becomes as important as interpretation. The creative process of building a context together with research participants takes considerable time and demands something we

called 'open readings'. An open rather than a closed reading means that there are limitless possible interpretations of a moment. If interpretations in the theater were not limitless, why would we bother seeing *Hamlet* a hundred times? The open reading of a research moment means that multiple interpretations can surface and a different form of triangulation can occur. I will return to this point, with empirical examples, in the third section of the chapter.

Despite a rather tightly designed methodology, in the study in question,³ our team of researchers most often moved instinctually. I attribute this orientation to the first major dilemma we encountered: what I had conceived as a study of drama education and questions of social cohesion for youth in North American public schools soon became a rather different examination of the impact on youth subjectivities – their artistic, academic, and social identities – of the new security and surveillance policies and practices in a post-9/11 world of schools. In other words, the socio-political context changed what we were there to learn.

From the start, we abandoned the pretense of objectivity, as have many feminist researchers who have similarly sought to break down power differentials in the research process. Acker *et al.* (1991) simply and persuasively argue that objectivity is a form of male bias that pervades theory and research. But to look back upon a three-year study and ask questions of the work that were not or could not be asked of it at the time is a rare opportunity. I want to ask why it seemed, at times, so messy and exciting, why it held the promise of real discovery, why it felt risky, and how it allowed us to tease out the complexities of collaborative research work: that is, collaborative among researcher and graduate research assistants and collaborative also among research team and youth research participants. It was an experiment in what I would now call a collaborative science.

At times, our approach to research also demanded an aesthetic response; by this I mean a response with sensibilities keenly attuned. Clair (2003: 19) offers a useful definition of aesthetic sensibility:

Freeing one's aesthetic sensibilities may help ethnographers to create 'untold, unheard, unseen, and heretofore unimagined possibilities' . . . In order to do this, I have suggested that we seek out aesthetic ways of being and give up restraints intended to limit ethnography; and instead, recognize and relish its complexities, subtleties, and ironies. After all, ethnography is not simply the methodological expression of anthropological field trips: it is the expression of history, politics, culture, and the essence of being. Ethnography necessarily implicates the ethnographer in the creation of an expression of who and what culture is all about.

What I take of significance from this portrayal is the contextual sensitivity that such an approach demands. My worry with much arts-based research is that it

somehow sees being artful as inherently ethical and thereby gets itself off the ethical hook. What I do not mean by an aesthetic response to ethnography is a self-absorbed art turn that naively side-steps the politics and ethics of being and creating with others. Instead, I see art as helping to rethink the social of social science research and offering openings for shifts in power and the reframing of the terms of engagement. In such a context, 'objectivity loses its mystique, its grip, its penchant to stare and snare' (Rawlins, 2003: 119–120).

The 'objective sciences', those that stake their claims to truth as some contrary of art, in other words, the other side of subjectivity, the universal, have produced a system of technologies (involving organization, procedures, symbols, new words, equations, and, most of all, a mindset⁴) that has profoundly modified our culture. To elucidate better the power and prevalence of this system, I turn here to feminist, experimental physicist Ursula Franklin, who has helped me to rethink the *science* of social science research. As opposed to what she calls *holistic technologies*, wherein the individual worker is in control of a particular process of creating or doing something, *prescriptive technologies* constitute a major social invention. In political terms, she says, prescriptive technologies are *designs for compliance*:

Today's real world of technology is characterized by the dominance of prescriptive technologies. Prescriptive technologies are not restricted to materials production. They are used in administrative and economic activities and in many aspects of governance, and on them rests the real world of technology in which we live. While we should not forget that these prescriptive technologies are often exceedingly effective and efficient, they come with an enormous social mortgage. The mortgage means that we live in a culture of compliance, that we are ever more conditioned to accept orthodoxy as normal, and to accept that there is only one way of doing 'it'.

(Franklin, 1999: 17)

Significantly, she argues, such prescriptive technologies eliminate the occasions for decision-making and judgement in general, and especially for the making of *principled* decisions. Prescriptive technologies have produced a 'production model in the mindset and political discourse of our time' and the 'new production-based models and metaphors are already so deeply rooted in our social and emotional fabric that it becomes almost sacrilege to question them' (*ibid.*: 27).

I have used Ursula Franklin's notion of a system of technologies in order to rethink more generally the 'scientific method' in research. As I look back upon the methodological processes in our research process, I now realize that we resisted the conventional separation of knowledge from experience, an important marker of traditional science, in its aim of discovering universally

applicable laws of nature and to extract the general from the particular. Franklin (2006: 315), in another work, points to the intrinsic lack of context in any general law that limits that law's usefulness and claims that the emphasis on abstract over concrete experience has significantly lessened the confidence of people in the astuteness of their own senses. As I now proceed to specific instances from our research to elucidate what I mean by a collaborative scientific methodology and how we enacted a participatory and theater-driven model of research, I take especially from Franklin's theorizing the emphasis on the social nature of scholarship. Citing Ruth Hubbard's book *The Politics of Women's Biology*, she suggests that there is in society a process by which experimentation, study, and contemplation result in knowledge that, after processes of vetting, society accepts as fact. 'It is important to realize that fact-making is a social process, and that much of the process of sanctioning the fact-makers has taken place within male society' (*ibid.*: 323). After a look at the nature of our collaboration and the terms of communication and engagement we designed in our work with youth, I will, finally, turn to some closing reflections of our study made by various researchers, to make concrete the idea of a context-specific and embodied methodology in the human sciences.

Methodology: the story behind the story

One might have the impression, from scholarly writing in the biomedical and physical sciences, that teams of researchers regularly collaborate in the production of knowledge. What is seldom clear from such multi-authored accounts is how that knowledge was collaboratively produced. The 'lead author' might have the lion's share of rights to the intellectual property of the work, but how any of this comes to be in the research event remains a relative mystery. What I am attempting to do in this section is re-examine some of the methodological steps we took in order to keep multiple interpretations of multiple researchers (in our case a principal investigator and three graduate students) in productive tension with each other; how we formed open readings of our research sites so that new ideas could emerge. Like E. M. Forster in his *Room With a View*, we often approached the field as a room with (at least) four views. In my published account of this research, I demonstrate how one Toronto classroom held multiple and conflicting perspectives by including the unabridged versions of four researchers' fieldnotes from one class period. In part, this allowed us immediately to dispel the myth of objectivity and to be guided, theoretically, by Judith Butler's (1995: 131) question: how is it that we become available to a transformation of who we are, a contestation which compels us to rethink ourselves, a reconfiguration of our 'place' and our 'ground'? One classroom is bursting to capacity with stories, different storylines we choose to follow, different relationships we note; my eye falls on one, while another's ear is attuned to a different one, with each of us attending to Butler's question. How *do* we become available to different readings? How

do we reconfigure our place and our ground? How do the research site and those in it affect us? Discussing, at the outset, both how and why we each became open to a particular narrative created important points of discussion. One result is most certainly a layered account of a research event. But this is more than a textual strategy. The principle of polyvocality challenges the primacy of any one researcher's interpretation, resists the 'closed' interpretation, and undoubtedly guides the design of the methodology.

In subsequent readings of methodology, I have come across the term 'interpretive ethnography' and perhaps unlike its obvious title, writers of this tradition seem to come closest to the kind of predisposition toward open readings I mention here. Goodhall Jr. (2003: 59; original emphasis) explains this as 'more of an *attitude about studying and speaking* brought into the world than it is a strict methodology . . . It is also more about choices among ways of living a scholarly *lifestyle*, and using scholarly *energies and passions*, than it is a canonical allegiance to a set of sacred texts.' The writer is not suggesting that such ethnographies are intellectually sloppy or procedurally weak but that interpretations arise as mysteries of sorts, to which researchers will have personal connection, and do not present themselves as problems to be solved or riddles to be answered.

In addition to using differently positioned researchers to layer an ethnographic account, there are techniques that might be used to differently layer *one's own* account and get at the doubts or the paradoxes of one's own interpretation. In our study, this occurred once, very memorably. After participating in a harrowing seventy-six-minute, whole-class discussion that was blatantly marked by homophobic attitudes freely expressed,⁵ our team of researchers returned to the university utterly depleted by the experience. Methodologically, it occurred to me that we needed, in some way, to mark this 'social drama' (Turner, 1982) – what Turner describes as the equilibrium of norm-governed social interaction being upset – by engaging in some purposeful journaling. I confess that I am not much of a journal-writer in the routine course of research, but placing a frame of significance around a particular event in the field and engaging in reflective writing after the research encounter has produced important results. In this instance, I guided the writing of our team with the following question: in what ways did you make yourself present and in what ways did you make yourself absent in today's classroom discussion? I asked this question because in a short debriefing after the discussion, it was clear that each of us felt culpable; disappointed in ourselves that we hadn't intervened more. In further discussion, it came to light that some of us were struggling with the notion of 'objectivity', and with our position as researchers in the classroom. It was especially interesting to me that this positivist notion of objectivity reared its head in our work in the face of the ethical obligation we clearly felt – to counter the homophobic attitudes that were being propagated. With our silence, there were both personal and pedagogical compromises, and neither was consistent with our stated research

position as 'emotionally aware inter-actor[s] engaged with other actors' (Gearing, 1995: 211). But it was too late; we could not replay the scene. However, when we each answered the question I posed in our reflective writing, the logic and chains of reasoning for each individual researcher became apparent. I would use this productive writing technique again to ask of researchers how we regularly make ourselves present and absent in the work that we do. This move returned us again to Butler's provocative question: what would incite a reconfiguration of our place and our ground? Being 'fully involved' in a research encounter, then, means attending to the moments of engagement and withdrawal that betray our interpretive lenses.

A further technique I developed to draw attention to our differently positioned eyes in our collaborative 'looking' involved a private choice to be made by each of us. Now, instead of just taking in the research site in our individual fieldnotes, I asked each researcher to spend time attending specifically to one student who posed a problem for them, who created some kind of challenge. Each of us chose a student we were attracted to, one who especially compelled us to understand better the context and his/her relationship to it. In her troubling of the now common and often romanticized practice of hearing the 'student voice' in educational research, Cook-Sather (2007: 394) acknowledges 'how hard it is to learn from voices we do not want to hear (Bragg, 2001; Johnston and Nicholls, 1995) and to learn to hear the voices we do not know how to hear'. This method not only produced extraordinarily different accounts of the class period but engaged us in a fruitful discussion about our predispositions, our positioning of 'others' in our looking glasses, and our selective frames for looking. Not only, then, did we hear the chosen students with a particular precision, but, more importantly, we opened up a discussion about our analytical filters.

Early on in our research, as a result of 'observations' in one of the research sites, I arrived at the concept of a *porous methodology*. Our porous methodology was driven, often enough, by the explicit and immediate needs in the field. The case I am referring to here is a site in which neither the teacher nor the students were at ease in their environment. The teacher, we later learned, was coerced into teaching the drama class and the students were deeply dissatisfied with both what was being taught (drama from a textbook) and how they were being treated. The teacher's reluctance and insecurity produced a barren context in which she blamed many of the students for being 'bad' and unwilling to learn. From very early on we could see that this classroom was not working well for anybody. Because of the heavy constraints placed on everyone in such an environment, I considered that the feminist methodological turn toward 'dialogue' might be our best way forward, a shift from visual metaphors (of 'seeing' and 'observing') to metaphors expressing voice ('listening' and 'understanding') (see Callaway, 1992). As I review early fieldnotes from this site, I see that I was particularly anxious not simply to 'observe' but to carry out a more feminist methodology as a process holding promise for

change. It was, in truth, a methodological thought-experiment. We faced a dilemma, it was clear, and our way forward was to rethink entirely the methodological grounding for this site. We decided that our best course for a more dialogical approach would be to engage in drama with the students. The teacher, it turned out, was more than happy to have us engage so fully with the students, and the students too were eager to do drama, even with relative strangers. Our work, then, in this site became embedded in the practice of working and creating with the students: any semblance of neutrality or objectivity was eradicated completely. Methodologically, we were concerned to create a shared context with the students and reflect upon our work together. More than is probably typical, we moved seamlessly between research and pedagogy in this site. In the next section, I will mobilize theory to make sense of the turn toward pedagogically informed, participatory research with youth in both this site and another, a move that has considerably changed my understanding of qualitative and empirical methodology.

Participatory research: a methodology of chance

Cooke and Kothari (2001) have cautioned against the technologies of participation becoming ‘the new tyranny’. While this is a useful caveat, I would like, in this section, to think through the possibilities of participation from an arts perspective. It is true that rules of conduct and systems of participation can no doubt simply produce another form of performance of, or adherence to, a set of norms. Whereas Ursula Franklin cautioned against the ways in which productive technologies might ‘fix us’, forms of research participation might equally entrench certain systems of governance and conduct. I am persuaded, however, that our turn to theater accomplished something quite different both in terms of the work we created with youth and the effect this collaboration had on other aspects of our research collaboration, particularly our interviews/conversations with youth and their decisions – at critical moments – to ‘return the gaze’.

To exemplify better what I mean by an ‘arts perspective’, I turn here to Irish playwright Brian Friel, whose theoretical writing on the arts/theater has helped me to think more consciously about ‘participation’ in research and use it, methodologically, as counterpoint to those technologies that fix us/our research participants and cause us/our research participants to mistrust or even subvert our own senses and sense-making. In Friel’s (1999: 16) view:

The arts grow and wither and expand and contract erratically and sporadically. Like beachcombers or Irish tinkers they live precariously, existing from idea to idea, from theory to theory, from experiment to experiment. They do owe something to the tradition in which they grow; and they bear some relationship to current economic and political trends. But they are what they are at any given time and in any given place

because of the condition and climate of thought that prevail at that time and in that place. And if the condition and climate are not right, the arts lift their tents and drift off to a new place.

Flux is their only constant; the crossroads their only home; impermanence their only yardstick. Once they realize that they have been so long in one site that they have come to be looked on as a distinct movement, that city hall is thinking of extending the city boundaries so that they can be absorbed into a comfortable community, they take fright, attack the movement – the apparent permanence – that they themselves have created, reject the offer of hospitality, and move to a new location. This is the only pattern of their existence: the persistence of the search; the discovery of a new concept; the analysis, exploration, exposition of that concept; the preaching of that gospel to reluctant ears; and then, when the first converts are made, the inevitable disillusion and dissatisfaction because the theory is already out of date or was simply a false dawn. And then the moving on; the continuing of the search; the flux. Impermanence is the only constant.

The most daring method we used in our work with the youth of our study was to turn deliberately to a theater frame. We did this in the second year of the study and almost by accident. We used improvisational drama, as others have done (see Conrad, 2002), not only to present a research text in an endless variety of ways (see Gallagher, 2006; Goldstein, 2003; Saldana, 1999; Donmoyer and Yennie-Donmoyer, 1995; Mienczakowski, 1995; Norris, 1997) but to generate data and engage our youth co-researchers in forms of analysis. At first, however, we moved tentatively, reluctant, I think, to abandon totally our position as ‘the researchers’. So we began by sharing the transcripts of interviews from the first year of the study with these students of the second year of our study. It was our intention, we explained, to work with them as co-researchers, explaining that we hoped to check our analyses of the first year of the research by seeing what *they* made of the same materials upon which we were basing our understandings. Only we were not going to sit around and discuss these ideas; rather, because this was a drama class, we were going to treat these transcripts as pretexts for scenes they would create to exemplify what they thought was going on in the transcripts. We wanted to see whether the themes we had determined from the data were represented by the youth in their interpretations and performances of the same data. One might consider this our first attempt at member-checking, a returning of the ‘data’ to research participants or knowledgeable individuals (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Many others have very productively used this method (see Lather and Smithies, 1997; Mattson and Stage, 2001), but in our case it was a rather unrewarding experience. In making a system of our method, in contriving a form of participation, we had limited the art experience, the ‘search’, or the movement of ideas of which Friel speaks so eloquently.

We returned to the data ourselves – the fieldnotes, the interview transcripts, the student writing we had collected – and it was then that I noted one of the most prevalent and recurring themes: identity–representation–surveillance. This had been a concept to which many students, individually, had returned repeatedly. In short, this ‘theme’ expressed a sense of students’ feeling perpetually watched and negatively labeled by new school policies and practices, such as ID tags, video surveillance cameras, and new attendance policies. Based on this analysis, we loosely devised an extended improvisation activity relating to the theme, and explained that we would all take on roles in a fictional workplace, in a world of an employee review in which the students – as employees – would undergo a work performance review at the hands of the bureaucrats of the company (myself and one research assistant, Philip Lortie). This improvised work, set in a more distanced meta-context, asked us all, students and researchers, to enter imaginatively into a created world to improvise and reflect upon our understandings of, and responses to, this imagined world and its relationship to our ‘real world’. Henry (2000: 51) persuasively argues that: ‘The structures of qualitative research and of dramas take innovative forms in which means and ends, thought and action, intertwine in an unpremeditated, improvisational fashion. Both involve ways of knowing which people use in their everyday lives: existential knowledge.’ Upon reflection, Philip Lortie referred to this improvisational method as a move from watching to ‘being with’, a moment that gave us a shared vocabulary, a turning away from certainty so we could peer through the fog at one another. I will not go into extensive detail here about the actual experience but merely say that this turn toward theater fundamentally changed the terms of engagement and the modes of communication available to us as co-researchers for the duration of the study.⁶

What this meant, in the first instance, was a shared context from which to draw in subsequent interviews, conversations, and interactions. Quite apart from being a fascinating experience in itself, it provided a shared reference point that shifted the power relations or at least made manifest the complex ways in which we read and are read by others in all human interactions. It no longer meant that we only proceeded in dialogue with the youth based on our prepared interview protocols but that our interviews now exceeded time-bound methods and came when they should have, when a situation or event warranted further discussion. Goffman (1959) imagines culture as an ongoing conversation in which we are not aware of its beginning, nor of its end. Methodologically, this meant that we used our interview questions in quite a different way than we had anticipated.

After such a free-form experience with the youth, I returned to the study’s objectives to remind myself of our goals. I thought this would help create a contextual picture around our original transcripts, fieldnotes, and artifacts to date. From this rereading came a list of six new questions that I wanted to ask. These were not questions that were explicitly asked of the research participants,

but a list of six disembodied questions I wanted to ask of the data themselves. They were:

- What does ‘arts as good’ mean in schools/for youth?
- What policy-relevant practices are identifiable that support greater social cohesion in diverse classrooms?
- What do aesthetic practices in schools have to say to the larger school culture with respect to their positive impact on the formation of youth identities and peer relations?
- How might conflict be addressed differently in light of arts-based pedagogical choices?
- What role does creativity have to play more generally in young people’s encounters with curriculum?
- How do students take actions differently in drama classes?

Our following conversations or conversational explorations with youth from that point on, often evanescent in contrast, would attend to context and relationships, while the questions above attended to academic inquiry. I began to separate these two notions in my head, a process that most certainly helped me understand why the qualitative analysis software was of limited use. The formulated questions allowed us to map out terrain from our data, but the interviews and conversations that followed our improvised drama work allowed us to see that our work with youth was almost intercultural, that nothing that was said was ever irrelevant to the study, and that language and the vernacular of youth is often shut down by the deafening volume of ‘authoritative discourses’ (Bakhtin, 1981: 344). This kind of conversation also allowed us to speak with youth without focusing exclusively on their direct experience. Because we had imagined another world together, we were much freer to engage in macro-level discussions and freely abandon the explicit purposes of our speaking. We could engage in a curiosity and even an ignorance about each other against which the typical interview protocol militates.

Acting is fundamentally about communicating, about listening to another, as I have elsewhere argued.⁷ An essay on listening in qualitative research by William Rawlins (2003: 122) gets precisely to this point, and with it we find ourselves back at the ‘reconfiguration of our place and our ground’ as researchers:

Hearing others is not a passive enactment of being-in-conversation. Hearing voices, it says something about you that is critical. It identifies you as someone who has postponed speaking, someone who is reserving and respecting the space of talk for (an)other. It announces you as someone potentially open to the other’s voice, at least in this moment when he/she is speaking. Listening in this way is a committed, active passivity. It is an opening in practice, conscientious listening . . . Even so, this speaking

constituted by your listening matters only if you actually do hear, only if you allow the other person's voice and stories to reach you, to change you. For if you really hear what the other is saying, you cannot remain the same. You are not the same. Something of value has been shared with you. Hearing the other's words, stories, concerns, and particulars tells you this.

A final moment in our research, reflected again in a methodological experiment, had us inviting our youth co-researchers⁸ to develop their own interview protocols. Sitting in two long rows in the classroom, facing each other – one on one – they began to ask both simple and complicated questions of one another. We, the researchers, moved around the room, listening. And then the unexpected happened: Andre turned the gaze on us. 'Are you satisfied with the research you did at Middleview and other places you've been to?' It was a question for us. This was not supposed to be part of the protocol, but why shouldn't they have been interested in interrogating us? Why hadn't I anticipated this? Then Ari: 'This is a question for an adult, so whoever wants to answer . . . Um, as a teenager, you must have felt lost and hoped that you'd find your way when you reached adulthood. But now that you're an adult, do you feel as sure of yourself and the point of life?' It was the case that they had been 'co-researchers' with us, but they were also increasingly aware that the authorial privileges and responsibilities lay with me. Then Misha: 'OK, I have a question for you guys. What is the . . . what was the best idea that you guys got from us so far?' Philip later called this moment beautiful, theatrical even: they talked to each other while we watched; then they asked us questions out of frame.

Final considerations: a methodological conversation

I close with some thoughts that follow from a conversation one year after the completion of the study with three of the research assistants, all of whom have now graduated, one with an MA and two with Ph.D.s. In preparation for this chapter, I asked them if they might be interested in having a conversation about the work we had done together. To 'get the juices going', I emailed ten questions that I thought might trigger some of the details of our work:

- 1 What was your favorite methodological moment/move of the study?
- 2 When did our methodology seem more like art than science? Or more like science than art?
- 3 Can you think of an instance when intuition seemed particularly important?
- 4 When we used drama – methodologically – did you think any particular theory/theories were (even if latently) in operation?

- 5 What role(s) do you think the participants played in determining our methods and/or guiding our methodology?
- 6 Does ethnography feel different in drama/arts classes than what one might expect in other classes? If so, in what ways?
- 7 What role did your thinking about our methodology/methods play in your coding of data at the point of analysis? (Did our methods make coding easier? Harder? More memorable? More complex? Less/more straightforward?, etc.)
- 8 How important was it that there were at least two and often three or four of us in the room? How did this change things?
- 9 Can you remember a moment when you felt very lost (methodologically speaking)?
- 10 Can you remember any epiphanic moments/moments of great clarity in terms of how we were proceeding with the research?

Over two hours in, we had touched upon maybe four of the above questions. I explained that my aim was not to make a system of what we did but that I did want to write a piece that might make a case for doing things differently. And that is what I have called here a ‘collaborative science’ and one that turns self-consciously to the arts/theater to open things up and defy the social mortgage of prescriptive technologies that Ursula Franklin fears.

I would like to share a few insights about that conversation. The first came from a query expressed by Philip. He worried that he had, at times, lost the research frame because we were so enmeshed in the pedagogical and dramatic ones. This concern helped me to understand and articulate that I believed that good dramatic evolution would, *de facto*, be good methodological progress. Maybe this was a survival instinct since we were treading in relatively untested waters, but I did not have a split-screen in my head where rich dramatic or pedagogic moves deviated from sound methodological choices. In my thinking, one clearly supported the other and this synchronicity moved in both directions.

Dominique worried that our attempts to quantify and code, using N6 (the qualitative software), did not lend credence to the analysis. But as the conversation evolved we realized that being forced into such technologies pointed out the ways in which we were exceeding containments and so it was productive in unanticipated ways. This is not to say that we think human behavior should always be exceptionalized and that there is no value in asking quantitative questions or studying human behavior in macro terms. In our case, however, the theater classroom was about the social and personal environment, as perhaps all classrooms should be; in it performance standards are more subjective and so are driven by more humanistic terms. That is precisely why a porous methodology was necessary.

If, however, I want my ‘drama methods’ to be more than simply interesting improvisational ‘tools’ – if, for instance, I want a theater methodology to be

built into the conceptualizing of future work with youth – what will make these applied methods theoretically robust? What would constitute a theater methodology in social science research? Isabelle called it an ‘embodied methodology’, something that comes from theater practice and therefore reframes the research context, transforms the research space as space. She continued, ‘Isn’t it grounded theory in the making?’ My problem with traditional notions of grounded theory stem from its basic premise that there are no *a priori* assumptions, that something entirely new emerges from the mist. This *carte-blanche*’ notion makes little sense to me. It is as though we assign ignorance, play politically naive, disregard power relations. ‘But the ground,’ says Dominique, ‘the assumptions are the ground. We’re bringing them up from the ground.’

A rethinking of grounded theory? A methodology arising from the performance of our assumptions? Something embodied in a transformed research space? Something pedagogical and methodological all at once? Something aesthetically attuned and politically engaged? I have clearly not made a system of our work together. But I have called it a collaborative science because Ursula Franklin has helped me to reimagine the *science* of social science research. I have called it participatory because the collective enterprise of theater and its rejection of the ‘hospitality’ of permanence, ‘the false dawn’, and its celebration of a ‘continuing of the search; the flux’ (Friel, 1999: 16) have helped me to make better sense of our philosophical dilemmas and methodological shifts. Importantly, a dialectical interchange between science and art seems all the more indispensable in social sciences and humanities research; and for education, in particular, such an exchange holds out the promise of a human science where new discoveries and principled decisions might be made.

Notes

- 1 In this chapter, I am speaking about the collaborative work of a team of researchers that included, in addition to myself, four graduate students – Philip Lortie, Dominique Riviere, Isabelle Kim, and Adam Guzkowski – whose skills and creative talents were incalculable.
- 2 By ‘human sciences’, I am not referring to physiology, anatomy, and biomedical sciences, but rather I am reclaiming the ‘human’, here, for the social sciences.
- 3 The study is now published as Gallagher (2007).
- 4 For a carefully drawn account of these processes, see Franklin (1999).
- 5 For a verbatim account of the conversation and further analysis, see Gallagher (2006).
- 6 For a detailed account, see Gallagher and Lortie (2005).
- 7 For a discussion of interviewing as theatrical improvisation, see Gallagher (2004).
- 8 I use this term prudently. As I have explained elsewhere with respect to our study, to present ourselves as ‘co-researchers’ to a diverse roomful of high school drama students did not make it so. We never lost sight of the power dynamics at work in presenting ourselves in this way: due to our elevated professional status and

access to cultural capital (relative to the teacher and the students), we had the luxury of conferring whatever titles we wished to ourselves and to our students. Simply calling ourselves co-researchers did not make it so. From several casual asides uttered by the students, we were aware that their conception of a researcher was of someone who experiments, uses trial and error; we were thought of as impartial observers, appraisers, highly educated people conducting tests to generate data, with the results and conclusions to be published in a scientific journal they would never read. Given their preconceptions and our desire to establish a trusting relationship with the class, it was a daunting task: to genuinely collaborate with them on this research; to explicate the subtleties of our critical ethnographic methodology; to overturn an in-built self-consciousness that obtains whenever visitors from outside the classroom come to observe; and to remain ever vigilant about our raced, classed, gendered translations of *their* ideas.

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Part II

Representation and relationships

Performed ethnography

Possibilities, multiple commitments, and the pursuit of rigor

Tara Goldstein

Introduction

In the last twenty years a number of ethnographers working in the field of education, myself included, have been experimenting with a form of writing and disseminating research known as ‘performed ethnography’ (Brunner, 1999; Gallagher, 2006; Goldstein, 2003, 2006, 2007; Mienczakowski, 1997; Sykes and Goldstein, 2004). Briefly, performed ethnography, also known as ‘performance ethnography’ (Denzin, 2003) and ‘ethnodrama’ (Saldaña, 2005), involves turning educational ethnographic data and texts into scripts and dramas that are either read aloud by a group of participants or performed before audiences. The richness of performed ethnography comes from three sources: the ethnographic research from which a play script is created; the reading or performance of the play; and the conversations that take place after the reading or performance. In these follow-up conversations, research participants and other readers or audience members have input about the conclusions of the research. This allows for ongoing analysis of the research findings. The incorporation of audience input can help create more ethical relationships between researchers, their research participants, and the communities to which the research participants belong by providing an opportunity for mutual analysis. Post-reading/performance conversations also allow ethnographers in education to link their research to their teaching and larger public forums on pressing social issues. For example, at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT), where I work as an educational researcher and teacher educator, the reading and performing of critical ethnographic scripts have engaged our teacher education students, and the general public, in critical analysis and discussions of critical teaching practices in the areas of multilingual, anti-racist, and anti-homophobia education (Goldstein, 2000, 2004c, 2004b; Sykes and Goldstein, 2004). It is the potential pedagogical power of performed ethnography to provoke critical analysis and institutional change that is at the center of my experimentation with ethnographic playwriting and at the heart of the methodological dilemmas I present here.

In this chapter, I argue that while performed ethnography (just one of many literary and arts-based approaches with which contemporary researchers are experimenting (see, e.g., Behar, 1995; Diamond and Mullen 1999)) offers ethnographers a productive way of engaging in the political dilemmas of research production raised by postmodern anthropologists, its hybridity as a text that strives to be, at once, ethnographic, dramatic, and catalytic (Lather, 1986) demands multiple commitments of the researcher. Thus, at the same time as performed ethnography attempts to respond to political and cultural predicaments of research production, it creates new ones.

The chapter begins with a discussion of performed ethnography's potential to respond to contemporary, postmodern challenges to realist traditions in ethnography. It then moves to a reflective analysis of the ways in which the hybridity of performed ethnography creates new predicaments or dilemmas for the researcher. I conclude the chapter by suggesting that ongoing reflective inquiry into the dilemmas of performed ethnography (such as the reflective analysis presented here) needs to accompany the production of ethnographic scripts and performances.

Performed ethnography: engaging with the literary turn in American anthropology

I began writing my first critical performed ethnography, *Hong Kong, Canada*, in 1999 after completing a four-year critical ethnographic study on language practices in a Canadian multilingual high school (Goldstein, 2003). My experimentation with ethnographic playwriting was a deliberate attempt to engage with the postmodern literary turn in American anthropology that had begun in the mid-1980s (Behar, 1995; Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Marcus and Fischer, 1986). This literary turn was set off by discussions about the predicaments of cultural representation in ethnography raised in the 1986 anthology *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. That anthology was edited by James Clifford, a historian of anthropology, and George Marcus, an anthropologist and critic of the 'realist' traditions in ethnographic writing that were dominant at the time. As explained by feminist anthropologist Ruth Behar (1995: 3), 'The book's purpose was to make an incredibly obvious point: that anthropologists write. And further, that what they write, namely ethnographies – a strange cross between the realist novel, the travel account, the memoir, and the scientific report – had to be understood in terms of poetics and politics.'

At the heart of the postmodern literary turn in American anthropology was the understanding that ethnographers *invent* rather than represent ethnographic truths (Clifford, 1983). Ethnographies were not transparent mirrors of culture that realist ethnographers presumed them to be (Behar, 1995). The contributors of *Writing Culture* also questioned the politics of a poetics, a

system of writing, that relied on the words and stories of (frequently less privileged) others for its existence without providing any of the benefits of authorship to the research participants who assisted the anthropologist in the writing of their culture (Fox, 1991; Geertz, 1988).

In response to these predicaments of cultural representation, James Clifford set out a new agenda for (American) anthropology in his introduction to *Writing Culture*: anthropology needed to encourage more innovative, dialogic, and experimental writing that highlighted the ways ethnographies are invented by the ethnographers who write them. At the same time, the 'new ethnography' needed to reflect a more 'profound self-consciousness of the workings of power and the partialness of all truth, both in the text and in the world' (Behar, 1995: 4). As summarized by Ruth Behar, while the 'new ethnography . . . would not resolve the profoundly troubling issues of inequality in a world fueled by global capitalism', it could at least attempt to 'decolonize the power relations inherent in the presentation of the Other' (*ibid.*).

The agenda of the 'new ethnography' resonated deeply with my own goals as an ethnographer poised to write up and disseminate my findings on language practices in a multilingual school. As a White, Canadian-born researcher who had undertaken an anti-racist ethnographic project concerning the education of immigrant children from Hong Kong, I needed to find a way to negotiate the politics of writing about *Other People's Children* (Delpit, 1995) when sharing my ethnographic findings. Like other contemporary educational ethnographers and researchers, I had inherited a legacy of racism and colonialism that made my research suspect (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). In writing and disseminating the findings of my critical, anti-racist ethnographic study, my task was to try to represent the experiences of those who participated in my study in a way that did not lead to the reproduction of the policies and practices of colonialism, linguistic discrimination, and racism I meant to challenge. I turned to ethnographic playwriting to help me do so.

The possibilities of performed ethnography

As I have written elsewhere (Goldstein, 2000), there are a number of reasons why ethnographic playwriting holds exciting possibilities for responding to postmodern challenges to realist ethnography and for representing the educational and schooling dilemmas facing Other people's children.

First, playwriting allows ethnographers to challenge the 'ethnographic authority' (Clifford, 1983; Lather, 1993) of their own writing. Ethnography is an interpretative, subjective, value-laden project. Writing up ethnographic data in the form of a play (in which the conflicts are real, verbatim transcription is often used, but the characters and plot are fictional) reminds readers and spectators that ethnographers invent rather than represent ethnographic truths. The artificiality of playwriting itself is a challenge to the ethnographic authority of realist writing. Playwright Kathleen George (1994: xv) reminds

us that 'Dialogue in playwriting is not conversation as we know it in our lives – it is the action of the play.'

Second, the performance of ethnographic playwriting discourages the fixed, unchanging ethnographic representations of research subjects, which have contributed to the construction of our destructive ideas of Other people and their children. Performance allows for changes in acting, intonation, lighting, blocking, and stage design. These changes can shape or even transform meaning of the ethnographic text each time it is performed (Kondo, 1995: 51).

Third, ethnographic performances give opportunities to Other actors whom, in performing the play, can enact and enlarge the identities of the characters that have been created by me. Asian-American anthropologist/playwright Dorinne Kondo (1995: 50) writes, 'The live aspect of theater is critical. Live performance not only constitutes a site where our identities can be enacted, it also opens up entire realms of cultural possibility, enlarging our senses of ourselves.'

Fourth, when ethnographers write up their findings in the form of a play, which is then performed, the subjects of their research and others in their communities can view a performance of their ethnographic work and ratify or critique its analysis. Ethnographers can keep rewriting and performing in response to Other people's responses. This provides their work with 'internal' (Lincoln, 1997) or 'face' (Lather, 1986) validity, which are important in discussions of rigor in ethnography.

Fifth, playwriting allows ethnographers to evaluate how their own biases may dominate the text. Importantly, performed ethnography offers ethnographers opportunities for both comment and speechlessness (Diamond and Mullen, 1999). An analysis of their characters' words and silences allows ethnographers to ask, 'Who gets the best lines?' 'Who gets the final word?' 'Who gets to speak and who doesn't?' 'How have I used silence in this play?' 'How does my character's silence speak on stage in a way it cannot in a traditional ethnographic text?'

Finally, performed ethnography has the power to reach large audiences and encourage public reflexive insight into the cultural experiences the ethnographer has presented (Barone *et al.*, 2000; Mienczakowski, 1997). At OISE/UT, there have been times when teacher candidates have said that encountering a new perspective or point of view from one or more characters (i.e., research participants) in an ethnographic script or performance has helped them question or rethink their own professional practices. In these moments, I know that the ethnographic performance has been useful to the readers or spectators of the play.

In writing ethnographic play scripts and in engaging in performed ethnography, I join other women ethnographers who have 'crossed the border between anthropology and literature' (Behar, 1995: 4). I was first inspired to experiment with ethnographic playwriting after reading excerpts from anthropologist Dorinne Kondo's ethnographic play *Dis(graceful) Conduct* in

Ruth Behar and Deborah Gordon's (1995) anthology *Women Writing Culture*. This anthology, which can be characterized as a feminist response to Clifford and Marcus's *Writing Culture* (1986), set out to trace a women's literary tradition in American anthropology. This was a tradition that was notably absent from the first anthology, which did not include any writing from women anthropologists.

Kondo's play is a political commentary about Orientalism and harassment of Asian women that is written in the form of a 'wacky, ridiculous, funny comedy/musical' (Kondo, 1995: 52). Further reading outside the discipline of anthropology took me into the world of theater studies and led me to the works of playwrights Anna Deavere Smith (1993, 1994) and Eve Ensler (1998), who were crossing another border, one between theater-making, ethnographic interviewing, and anthropology.

As mentioned earlier, while my experiments with ethnographic playwriting and performed ethnography have allowed me to respond to the new agendas of postmodern ethnography in ways that also engage teacher education students, and the general public, in critical analysis of contemporary teaching dilemmas and practices, after eight years of experimentation, I recognize that the creation of rigorous, engaging performed ethnography presents its own set of dilemmas. As a writing method that links ethnographic data analysis to dramatic writing, dramatic performance to critical conversation and discussion, performed ethnography demands multiple commitments of the researcher, which sometimes compete and lie in tension with one another.

The multiple commitments of performed ethnography and the pursuit of rigor and engagement: an ongoing set of dilemmas

Recently, I have begun to inquire into the ways that the multiple commitments to ethnography, drama, research ethics, and institutional change compete with one another in my performed ethnographic work. There are two related reasons why such inquiry is important. First, as ever more graduate students and established scholars in education become interested in using performed ethnography to write up and disseminate the findings of their thesis studies and research programs, practicing performed ethnographers need to model the ways they identify the multiple commitments underlying their work and the ways they have responded when one or more of these commitments have come into competition or tension with another. Such modeling of how to respond to predicaments of writing and dissemination can contribute to the production of strong performed ethnographies that are judged or assessed as meritorious by different audiences: for example, an audience of ethnographers, an audience of theater-goers, or an audience of research participants.

Second, while there has been some preliminary writing about criteria to assess the merit of individual performed ethnographies (Denzin, 2003;

Bochner, 2000; Clough, 2000; Ellis, 2000; Richardson, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c), and some preliminary writing about whether it is desirable to devise any criteria at all (Bochner, 2000; Clough, 2000), there has been much less discussion, if any, about the competing writing and dissemination commitments that underlie ethnographic performances and scripts. Given that recent discussion of criteria for assessing performed ethnographies (and other arts-based research) has been highly individual and somewhat arbitrary (Clough, 2000), it has been difficult to compare or synthesize discussions of criteria across the writings of individual writers. Reflective inquiry into competing commitments that underlie performed ethnography may be more productive for creating strong performed ethnographies than attempting to synthesize and work with recent discussions of merit and assessment. To illustrate what such reflective inquiry might look like, I turn to a recent comparative analysis I undertook of two ethnographic play scripts I created from the same body of ethnographic data (Goldstein, under review (b)).

From *Snakes and Ladders* to *Alliance*: a comparative analysis of two ethnographic play scripts

Writing the play scripts

The two ethnographic play scripts I examine here are both based on data from a one-year study (2002–2003) on anti-homophobia education practices at the Toronto District School Board (TDSB). The Board operates 555 public elementary and secondary schools in the Greater Toronto Area and has an equity policy that requires all its teachers to work towards a homophobia-free teaching and learning environment (TDSB, 2000). The research study, entitled ‘Challenging Homophobia and Heterosexism in Elementary and High Schools’, investigated the ways in which one TDSB elementary school, one alternative middle school and two secondary schools had begun to implement the anti-homophobia equity policy the Board had instituted in the 2000–2001 school year (Goldstein *et al.*, in press). Six teachers and administrators working in the four TDSB schools were interviewed about their anti-homophobia education initiatives. I also visited three of the four schools to observe anti-homophobia education in action. In addition to the TDSB staff, I interviewed two OISE/UT pre-service teachers who were practice teaching in TDSB schools. The purpose of these pre-service teacher interviews was to investigate how new teachers working in TDSB schools felt about implementing the Board’s anti-homophobia equity policy.

In thinking about how to write up and disseminate my research on anti-homophobia education in public elementary and secondary schools, the need to demonstrate a ‘profound self-consciousness of the workings of power and the partialness of all truth’ (Behar, 1995: 4) again surfaced. As an

anti-homophobia teacher educator whose own activist post-secondary school teaching was not subject to the same institutional and public scrutiny as the schoolteachers and students in my research study, I wanted to provide the research participants and others in their communities with an ongoing way to ratify or critique my analysis and representation of their dilemmas, risks, and conflicts. I also wanted to find a way to keep rewriting my ethnographic analysis in response to their responses. My pursuit of internal and face validity led me to choose a writing method that could disrupt fixed, unchanging representations of participants in my study.

Snakes and Ladders (Goldstein, 2004d) was the first of two performed ethnographies to be written from the data of the study. The play captures the political conflicts and tensions that occur when two teachers and their students decide to put on a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) Pride Day at their high school. The title refers to the children's board game Snakes and Ladders and is meant to symbolize the 'ups and downs' of engaging in anti-homophobia education (and other forms of equity education) in public schools. The play is a sixty-minute ensemble piece that features two school principals (one experienced, one new to the role), two teachers (one straight, one lesbian), four student teachers (two straight, one gay, and one questioning), six high school students (three involved in the school's Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) and three involved in its Students and Teachers Against Racism (STAR) group), three parents of students attending the high school, and several friends and family members of the gay student teacher. There are twenty characters in all, a large number that has been said to burden the plot of the play.

Alliance (Goldstein, 2004a) is a thirty-minute adaptation of *Snakes and Ladders*. It tells the story of a new high school teacher who decides to come out to a questioning student who is being victimized by homophobic bullying. The title refers to the alliance between the two. The teacher comes out despite the straight high school principal's desire for him to keep his private life out of school.

Importantly, *Alliance* was written after I had workshopped *Snakes and Ladders* during the first semester of the MFA in playwriting program I completed at Spalding University in Louisville, Kentucky. I had enrolled in the program because I care deeply about the aesthetic commitments associated with the writing of performed ethnography and wanted to become more skilled at using the dramatic conventions audience members expect to see and hear at the theater. The second play was written in direct response to the critique I received about *Snakes and Ladders* in the workshop. The number of characters in the play adaptation was radically reduced from twenty to five, to make the plot more focused and aesthetically compact and dramatic. Three of the five characters (the high school principal, the school superintendent, and the questioning student) became composites of individuals I investigated in the ethnographic research, and the script does not include as many of the research

participants' direct voices as does *Snakes and Ladders*. One way of comparing the differences between plot and character development in the two plays is to say that in *Alliance* the plot drives the characters, whereas in *Snakes and Ladders* the characters drive the plot.

This particular writing dilemma of what drives an ethnographic script, plot or characters, reflects a common dilemma of research design: sometimes researchers choose to allow questions of theory and knowledge production (a scholarly plot) to drive their research design; other times their research design is driven by research participants (the characters) who bring their own social and political agendas to the study.¹

While *Snakes and Ladders* did not always conform to the dramatic conventions we studied in that first semester, *Alliance* conforms to more of them. In fact, the latter was written to demonstrate that I was able to make use of the dramatic conventions about which I had learned. When my revision was read aloud on the last day of the workshop program in that first semester, it received spontaneous applause. In the eyes of my workshop mentors and colleagues, I had succeeded in making *Alliance* more dramatic and emotionally engaging than *Snakes and Ladders*.

Reading, performing, and teaching with the plays

Despite its additional dramatic and emotional power, I have not yet taught with *Alliance*. In my pre-service teacher education classes at OISE/UT, my students and I continue to read, perform, and discuss *Snakes and Ladders* exclusively. With its large cast of characters that allows more of my students to participate in the reading of the play and with the greater number of conflicts and issues embedded into it, *Snakes and Ladders* opens up more conversations than *Alliance* does. And beginning a new conversation, or provoking a 'turn' in an old conversation (Bochner and Ellis, 2003), is important to meeting my pedagogical commitments as a performed ethnographer working in the field of education.

Furthermore, with its drastically reduced number of characters, *Alliance* also drastically reduces the complexity of the school setting in the play and compromises my fidelity to the diversity of TDSB schools I studied. Put a little differently, *Alliance* is not as faithful to the ethnographic realities I wanted to represent in my performed ethnographies. To gain a more streamlined plot, I lost parts of the sociocultural and sociopolitical picture of the school. For example, in contradistinction to *Snakes and Ladders*, there are no student teacher characters, no lesbian characters, and no students of African or Caribbean descent in *Alliance*. Thus, there is no mention of the constraints, conflicts, and responsibilities facing student teachers in the play, nor is there any representation of the competing commitments facing the African and Caribbean students in STAR and the White and Chinese students in the GSA.

My choice to read and perform *Snakes and Ladders* rather than *Alliance* with my teacher education students, however, has left at least one of them disappointed. To illustrate, in a reflection paper on the pedagogical usefulness of *Snakes and Ladders*, this student wrote: 'I do aesthetically prefer art that is emotionally heated . . . As an English teacher, I think the script could be introduced to a junior or intermediate level English class. I am concerned, however, that students may not be able to emotionally relate to the characters and storyline.' Clearly, attention to aesthetics as well as to ethnographic fidelity is important in creating a performed ethnography that is pedagogically powerful. A decision to teach with a script that prioritizes my ethnographic commitments over my aesthetic commitments means that I may lose some of the pedagogical power that is carried through the streamlined plot and emotional 'heat' of *Alliance*.²

In thinking about ways to respond to the tension between my aesthetic, ethnographic, and pedagogical commitments, it may be possible to rewrite *Snakes and Ladders* so that I keep its ethnographic complexity but add more dramatic tension and theatricality. In discussing this possibility in a session that I convened at the 2007 Association of Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE) conference entitled 'Dramatizing Research about the Lives of LGBTQ Youth', writer, director, and dramaturge Coya Paz from Teatro Luna in Chicago suggested that the model of traditional narrative theater I had been taught in my MFA program does not lend itself to the dramatizing of multiple conflicts. Thus, it may not be the best model for creating performed ethnography. Coya talked about a process she and others at Teatro Luna worked with to produce *The Maria Chronicles* and *Sexo*: they pooled stories they had collected in 'first person conversations' from fifteen women to produce a touring show that could be performed by five women. In writing this show from a set of first-person conversations, they combined different parts of different conversations into different performance pieces. I am very excited by this model used by Teatro Luna and think it holds interesting possibilities for producing powerful performed ethnographies that not only honor commitments to both ethnography and drama but are pedagogically or dialogically productive.

Further reading in the field of feminist theater and performance (e.g., Bennett, 2006; Canning, 1995; Case, 1988, 1990; Goodman, 1993; Hart and Phelan, 1993) has led me to other exciting theatrical models. For example, the Company of Sirens, a popular feminist theater troupe formed in Toronto in 1985, has produced a number of projects and shows that are research-driven, aesthetically pleasing, and educative. *The Working People's Picture Show*, a one-hour show about women's historical and contemporary relationship to work, has been described as a 'joyous and funny collection of satirical skits and popular songs given new politically conscious lyrics' (Bird, 2006: 29). The show features a number of rich characters, such as Rosemary Rosedale,³ an upper-middle-class housewife and 'true representative of the Canadian economy':

Perched atop an enormous princess-style dress, Rosemary represents the large looming patriarchal ideal of Angel-in-the house. While she shops for South African diamonds and South American fruit, other characters appear from under her skirts and about her feet to tell of the effect that such naive consumerism has on third world politics, poverty and people.

(*Ibid.*)

Freed from the conventions of traditional narrative theater, the Company of Sirens was able to present multiple conflicts in *The Working People's Picture Show* in an innovative and theatrical way.

One of the reasons it is important for performed ethnographers to find theatrical and performance models that can enable them to meet their multiple commitments has to do with the ethical imperative of performed ethnography. In contrast to more conventional forms of writing and dissemination of social science research, performed ethnography aims to 'take the people one relates with seriously' (Lieberman, 1999: 56) by providing them with an opportunity to speak about their lives in their own words and contribute to ongoing analyses of the research. Meeting this ethical commitment means finding writing and performance models that can accommodate many participant voices without losing dramatic tension or theatricality.

As mentioned earlier, and as the other chapters in this volume reveal, there are many contemporary social science researchers who are concerned with questions of voice and taking research participants seriously. Some of these researchers are drawing from a variety of literary traditions (Behar, 1995) to represent the voices of their participants. Others continue to work with social science writing forms but provide spaces for their participants' voices to dominate the text (see, e.g., Lather and Smithies, 1997). What the preceding reflective inquiry has to offer other researchers writing up hybrid texts that mix social science, literary, and biographical forms of writing is that hybridity is characterized by competing commitments. While our hybrid texts set out to respond to one set of representational predicaments, they also produce new ones.

Taking the voices of research participants seriously means not only accommodating as many participants' voices as possible but working purposefully to decolonize the research methods we use to conceptualize and design our research studies so that the research that we produce is 'useful' to participants' own political and social agendas (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). As mentioned earlier, one of the exciting possibilities underlying performed ethnography is its potential to provoke public reflexive insight into the cultural experiences and social issues the ethnographer has presented. When these issues are aligned with agendas that are important to the ethnographer's research participants, the potential of performed ethnography to be 'useful' (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999), 'impactful' (Richardson, 2000c), or 'catalytic' (Lather, 1986) increases. To

demonstrate usefulness, impactfulness, or catalytic validity, researchers need to produce evidence that their research process has led to insight, and ideally activism, on the part of either the research participants (Lather, 1986) or the consumers of the research who work with and may wield power over the research participants (Goldstein, 2003). And to provide satisfactory evidence of impactfulness, researchers need a framework to analyse the nature, depth, and extent of the insights, activism, or social change produced by their research.

Recently, I undertook another reflective inquiry to find out whether my performed ethnography around issues of school-based oppression was bringing about change in teacher education and school contexts, and, if so, what kinds of change it was bringing about (Goldstein, under review (a)). Once again, I used my work with my most recent ethnographic play, *Snakes and Ladders*, as the focal point of the inquiry. In conducting the inquiry, a small team of research assistants took observation fieldnotes during discussions of the play reading in six different teacher education classes at OISE/UT and then interviewed a small group of teacher education students about their experience of working with the play. In total, eight students from three different teacher education classes were interviewed. To analyse the data, I worked with the Triangle Model, a conceptual framework used in the field of anti-oppression schooling. A description of the model, which may be useful for other researchers searching for an analytical framework that can be used to inquire into activism or social change produced by their research, and a summary of the results of my inquiry follow.

The Triangle Model

As described by educational activist Tim McCaskell (2005: 245), the Triangle Model places what we know about experiences of oppression in schooling into three categories which are arranged in the shape of a triangle: institutional/systemic experiences, individual expressions, and common ideas.

Oppression often begins with ideas. Individuals act in a certain way because of the ideas they hold. Institutions act in particular ways because of the ideas of the people who run them. Thus, there is a relationship between the common ideas people hold and individual expressions of oppression, and institutional/systemic experiences of oppression. In thinking about where ideas originate, people learn them from institutions such as school. Thus, there is also a relationship between institutional/systemic oppression and common ideas. The connection runs both ways. However, ideas do not come only from institutions. People draw inferences from how they see particular groups of people being treated by others. Thus, individual actions also communicate ideas. There is a connection that runs between individual expressions of oppression and common ideas. There are also connections between how individuals behave and how institutions behave. If individuals who run institutions act in particular

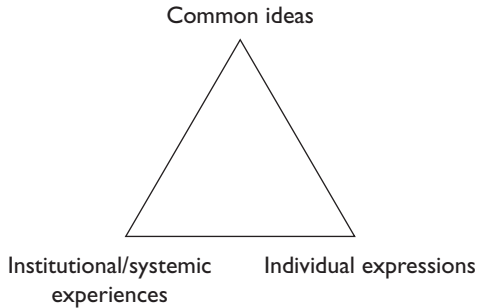


Figure 5.1 The Triangle Model

ways, institutional power amplifies their actions and their actions become part of the way in which the institution functions. This means that there is a connection between individual expressions of oppression and institutional/systemic oppression. Finally, institutions can shape individual action in ways other than promoting certain ideas. As McCaskell puts it, people behave in ways that the institution allows them to get away with. To illustrate, McCaskell argues that most schools have greater tolerance for sexist comments than for smoking. This tolerance illustrates a connection between institutional/systemic oppression and individual expressions of oppression. To summarize, there are two-way connections between all three categories of oppression. Oppression works as 'an unbroken cycle' (*ibid.*: 247).

To break down this cycle, educational activists (and activist researchers) need to challenge oppression in all three ways that people experience it. While changing people's ideas involves education, McCaskell argues that changing individual behavior involves implementing rules and consequences, as well as engaging in education. Returning to his example about smoking, he points out that schools do not just count on education about the dangers of smoking to stop people from smoking in class; there are rules and consequences related to smoking that are enforced by schools. To get schools to develop and enforce rules and consequences that challenge oppressive behaviors and to get schools to change what they are teaching, people need to talk to school officials, lobby them, protest, sign petitions, and elect leaders who will take action to challenge oppression in schools. This is political action. McCaskell believes that any anti-oppression strategy that is going to be effective has to include all of these: political action, education, and rules and consequences. If educational activists concentrate on just one area, the influences from the other corners of the triangle may undo their efforts (*ibid.*).

McCaskell suggests we often focus on individual actions when thinking of our experiences with different forms of oppression. Institutional processes tend to be more hidden and less obvious. Ideas are also often invisible until they are expressed in actions such as comments, jokes, or derogatory names.

He compares the triangle to an iceberg with individual actions on top and institutional practices and ideas hidden under the waterline. Although they are not always immediately visible, the ideas and institutional practices underwater support the individual actions that appear above the surface. This iceberg metaphor is helpful for thinking about the necessity of dealing with all three areas of oppression to bring about change. As McCaskell (*ibid.*: 248) points out:

What happens if you simply try to suppress individual actions (like many schools do) through rules and discipline? It's like pressing down on the top of an ice cube in a bowl of water. When you let go it just pops back up. If we really want to move that iceberg, we need to grasp all three corners at once. Otherwise it will always just slide away and the cycle will remain intact.

An analysis of the data from my *Snakes and Ladders* inquiry through the lens of the Triangle Model showed that most of the change work the performed ethnography did in my teacher education classes was in the areas of challenging homophobic ideas and provoking individual action (Goldstein, under review (a)). However, continued inquiry demonstrated that the use of the play could also provoke the beginnings of institutional change.

To illustrate, one of the sites in which *Snakes and Ladders* was performed was the first annual *Inquiries About Education* Conference held at OISE/UT in May 2004. This one-day educational activist conference was an outgrowth of one of our teacher education courses entitled 'Inquiries About Education'. The course is one of a wide variety of elective courses offered to teacher candidates at OISE/UT so that they can enrich their knowledge of pedagogy and schooling in an area of personal interest. The course was offered for the first time in 2002–2003, has been offered five times thus far, and will be offered a sixth time in January 2008. The purpose of the conference was to link the graduates of the first and second *Inquiries About Education* courses with one another and with other teachers and educational workers doing anti-homophobia work in their schools and communities. At the conference, a teacher from one of the TDSB's secondary schools that had not yet undertaken any anti-homophobia education work chose to participate in a reading of *Snakes and Ladders*. Engaging with the play and then listening to a panel of teachers talk about the GSAs that they had set up in their own schools motivated this teacher to begin a GSA at her own school. The group she started is called Students Against Sexual Stereotyping (SASS). It started with two teachers and a pre-service student from the third *Inquiries About Education* class laying the groundwork. They put together a proposal for establishing the group, the school administration approved the proposal, and by the end of the school year SASS involved four teachers, two more pre-service students from OISE/UT (who were not enrolled in the *Inquiries* course), and fifteen high school students.

In its first year, SASS held discussion groups and viewed videos on homophobia and heterosexism, and then prepared a set of two short introductory anti-homophobia education activities for each class in the school to undertake. The activities were led by the students involved in SASS. While not all teachers and students engaged in the activities SASS had planned, school-wide discussion of homophobia and heterosexism had begun in a school that had never before worked on the issue. At the end of the school year, the teacher who began SSAS proposed that the following year the group could create a professional development session on homophobia and heterosexism for all the teachers in the school. At the time of writing, this proposal had been approved and plans for the session were to begin in the following school year. Additionally, there had been discussion of creating other student–teacher social justice groups in the school and having them work together on an annual activity like the Anti-Racism and Pride Week featured in *Snakes and Ladders*.

My continued inquiry into the usefulness and impactfulness of the ethnographic play revealed a story of a teacher who was inspired by a tale of school activism that she encountered in the play reading. The teacher then used her institutional authority and position to provide leadership in challenging homophobia in her own school. Importantly, the representation of the tensions, conflicts, and dilemmas that the school activists experienced in the play – and the ways that they responded to these – was key to providing the teacher with the confidence to move forward. In a conversation about her school activism, the teacher told me, ‘After reading the play, I thought, “If that’s the worse that can happen, I can deal with that.”’ When individuals use their institutional authority to begin discussions of school-based social justice issues, institutional change begins.

Conclusion

In closing, this chapter on the possibilities and pursuit of rigor in performed ethnography has pointed to the benefits of reflective inquiry in assessing the ways in which particular projects are able to meet the multiple commitments ethnographic playwriting and performances entail. While all research has multiple audiences to be accountable to, the hybrid form of performed ethnography – part ethnography, part drama – requires the researcher-playwright to satisfy the social science demands of ethnography and the aesthetic demands of drama. When performed ethnography is also linked to goals of civic engagement and social change, there are pedagogical and dialogical demands to satisfy as well. Good ethnographic research is different from good drama. The two audiences have different loyalties and are looking for different things. An ethnographic audience is looking for thick description and social and cultural analysis. A play audience is looking for a powerful use of dramatic conventions and theatricality in addition to social and cultural analysis. Different expectations from different audiences create tensions for the

performed ethnographer, which may not always be fully resolved, even with innovative writing and performance models.

When the resolution of tensions between ethnographic, dramatic, and social change commitments is not possible, performed ethnographers need to be able, at least, to name the stakes involved in privileging one set of commitments over another, and pay close attention to ethical concerns that arise as a result of such privileging. Then they have to live with the choices they make and find ways of making their choices transparent so that the strength of their work can be assessed and critiqued by the members of their multiple and diverse audiences. Including 'Playwright's Notes' in ethnographic play scripts or in programs accompanying ethnographic performances may be helpful here.

In conclusion, while I have argued that performed ethnography holds exciting possibilities for responding to the predicaments of cultural representation in ethnography raised by postmodern anthropologists, it also presents its own dilemmas. Ongoing reflective inquiry into the work our performed ethnographies do and do not do, their dilemmas as well as their possibilities, helps ethnographers produce strong hybrid texts and model what rigorous performed ethnography entails.

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Notes

- 1 My thanks to Kathleen Gallagher for this insight.
- 2 In acknowledging the importance of emotional engagement to a pedagogy that is founded on performed ethnography, I also acknowledge the limitations of pursuing cathartic, emotional engagement in drama work without accompanying critical dialogue and discussion.
- 3 Rosedale is an economically privileged neighborhood in Toronto.

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Moving towards postcolonial, digital methods in qualitative research

Contexts, cameras, and relationships¹

Kathleen Gallagher and Isabelle Kim

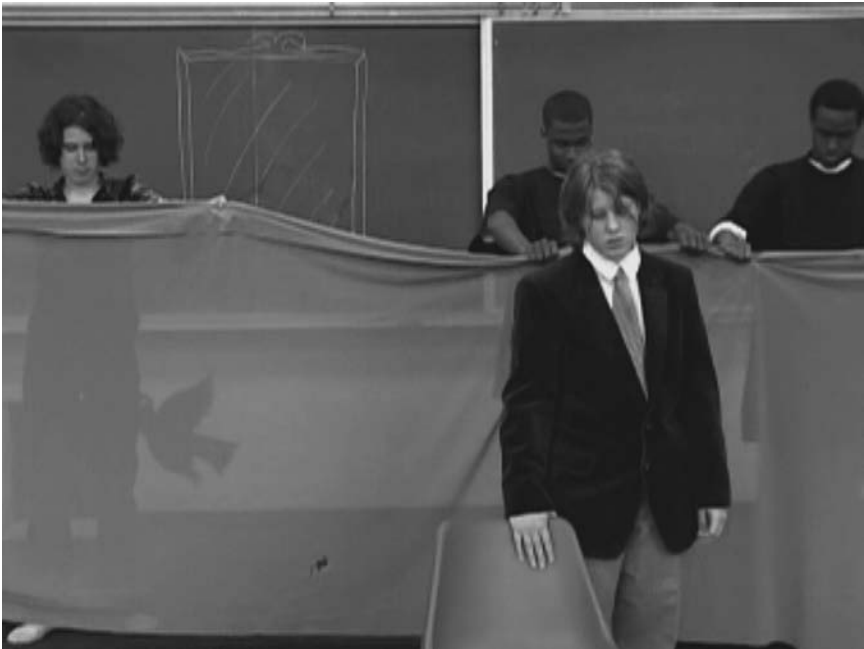


Plate 6.1 Grade 12 students in Toronto performing Anna Deavere Smith's play *Twilight: Los Angeles 1992*

In this chapter, we will take account of the camera's colonial history and bring this into conversation with current (digital) developments in qualitative research. Specifically, we wish to address the question of research relationships when these relationships are mediated through digital methodologies that carry the weighty legacy of history and the always fraught politics of representation. Using our case of an ethnographic study in four urban high schools, in which we used digital video methods, we attempt here to rethink established

aesthetics and politics assigned to the camera's eye in order to respond to some of the methodological and epistemological dilemmas encountered in such forms of research. Raising questions of method and ethics, we turn, at the end of the chapter, towards some practical considerations for the possibilities of collaborative, multi-perspectival digital video in post-positivist qualitative research.

Photography, film, video, and colonialism's gaze

The camera's gaze is presently, especially in Western contexts, associated with various forms of social control, as we see in the pervasive use of video surveillance cameras in schools and beyond (see Gallagher and Fusco, 2006), ostensibly for 'our' own protection. '[C]urrently the average city dweller in the UK is captured on CCTV 300 times a day; the USA and many other Western countries are fast catching up' (McGrath, 2004: 19). That the video camera has become such a ubiquitous monitoring tool today is not surprising given the history of visual media. Photography, like many successive visual media technologies, was first developed for scientific and technological purposes. The technological breakthroughs that led to cinema, for example, were made by scientists Muybridge and Marey, who were trying to analyze movement that escaped the naked eye (Darley, 2000). Cameras were also instrumental to the colonial project of surveying the 'exotic' that would otherwise not be seen by audiences 'back home', except through visual art representations. Colonial settlers, anthropologists, and artists were able to use photography, and later film, to 'capture' the 'natives' and circulate those images in the social imagination of colonial powers on a much greater scale than would have been possible through paintings alone. While scientists were utilizing visual media technologies to analyze micro movements, anthropologists saw in photography and film 'realist', and therefore more 'objective/scientific',² methods with which to scrutinize the ethnographic. Interestingly, the first ethnographic film was not made by an anthropologist but rather a physician specializing in pathological anatomy, Félix-Louis Regnault, who became interested in anthropology in 1895 (de Brigard, 1995). In North America, the early work of renowned documentary filmmaker Robert Flaherty, and anthropologists Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead (1942), as well as John Grierson's documentary film work between the two world wars in the UK, developed further interest in the use of photography and film in ethnographic research. These early works led to the emergence of the broader field of visual anthropology. The term 'salvage anthropology' (de Brigard, 1995) is now used to refer to the practice of trying to rescue marginal cultures at risk of social 'extinction' from historical oblivion by creating lasting audio-visual records. Voyeurism and 'museumification' are among the obviously problematic outcomes of this practice.

A cursory look at the lexicon common to photography, film, and video also suggests its colonial roots: 'white balance', a 'take', 'shooting', 'capturing',

'subjects'. There are positions of power related to being 'in front of' or 'behind' the camera; of being 'photogenic' or not; of the tone of one's skin. For instance, camera technology favors the appearance of white skin. 'White balance', in technical terms, remains the default mode to which cameras are set and, in theoretical terms, the default mode to which the researcher's eye has become adjusted. Artists of color working in postcolonial literature, 'exilic' and 'diasporic' cinema (Naficy, 2001), and critical research have, however, significantly destabilized this hegemonic mode. Some anthropologists, too, have been subverting accepted practices, as 'colonial subjects' started entering and transforming the field: 'Race and class conflagrations burst the mythology of the museum "native"' (Burawoy, 2000: 15). Much of the work in diasporic film and video festivals today, such as the Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival, addresses the politics of representation while inverting the colonial gaze of mainstream media. These auteurs have shed much light on the long-term and far-reaching influences of colonization into the present: "colonisation" is not simply a matter of economic/political dimension but also a problem of cultural/psychological dimension. The result is pervasive "otherness", that is, alienation from oneself, looking at oneself from the perspective of other people' (Cho, 1994: 22). What could be more alienating than looking at oneself through the looking-glass of research to see only constructed images masquerading as one's reflection? Postcolonial theory has helped to push the discussion of culture, identity, race, and art beyond essentialism, and the celebration of 'multiculturalism' into more critical, complex, and hybrid terrain (Gallagher and Rivière, 2004). Postcolonial writers and critics such as Edward Said (1979), Trinh T. Minh-ha (1991), Homi Bhabha (1994), Stuart Hall (1990), and Gyatri Spivak (1987) 'argue . . . that culture and identity are the products of human encounters, the inventories of cross-cultural appropriation and hybridity, not the elaboration of the ancestral essence of particular groups' (Matus and McCarthy, 2003: 77). Following Walter Benjamin (*c.* 1997), who argued that in order to prevent politics from becoming *aestheticized*, aesthetics needed to become *politicized*, we argue here that with respect to visual media and research, it is not a question of simply replacing the 'White gaze' with that of the 'Other' but of challenging the very naturalized modes of film/video and research production.

Over the last thirty years, the impact of video technology on social and artistic movements has been enormous, as has the 'social' impact upon the development and uses of video technology. Artist/activists worldwide continue to radicalize the production and reception of film and video, including, for example, combined uses of community theater, education, and live video screenings in India (see McDougall, 2003), Italy's Telestreet (Renzi, 2006), and Brazil's TV Maxambomba³ (Halleck, 2002), the community-based approach of the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation (Canada), and Paper Tiger Television and Deep Dish satellite (US) (see *ibid.*). Most recently, in the format of webcams and vlogs (video logs), and *machimina*,⁴ digital video has been used

to make political statements, and to make the personal public, with such websites as YouTube (Kim, 2007).

Experimenting with digital video research methods in classroom-based research



Plate 6.2 Grade 12 students in Toronto using the classroom space to warm up

While digital video might be effectively used in many classroom settings, we have found that the drama classroom, where our recent work has been situated, especially enables particular kinds of research relationships that make possible certain methodological experiments. On a very basic level, the ‘open’ space of the drama classroom, without the usual rows of desks and chairs, lends itself to videomaking, a process that requires freedom of movement. In Gallagher’s ethnographic research in drama classrooms in New York City and Toronto urban high schools,⁵ students in both cities identified the ‘openness’ of the drama classroom as playing a major role in enabling the kinds of social relationships and work made possible in drama, compared to other classes that were more traditionally set up with desks and chairs (Gallagher, 2007: 143). As Sanjeet, a South Asian, first-generation Canadian, Grade 12 student in one Toronto school explained:

The drama classroom plays a huge role. Again, if it was drama but we all sat in straight rows and desks, we wouldn't interact as much, but, um, it's very open. And maybe it's a reflection of what the class does to you inside. It opens you up, just like the open space, um, yeah . . . And it's conducive to, um, discussions, like when we sit around in a circle, you see everybody and you can make eye contact and, you know, people are nodding their heads so you know when you say something, they agree with you. Whereas if someone behind you agrees, you have no idea.

The drama classroom can be a space that is more 'permissive' in some ways, a space in which speaking out of turn is the norm; a space that is the crossroads of students' performances as 'students', socially positioned by gender, race, class, ability, and sexuality, as they are – and as artists, young people improvising performances and identities out of thin air. The drama classroom, in our experience, can open up spaces for both imaginary and real 'border crossings'. We are, of course, not suggesting that the drama classroom space is unproblematic by nature, as Ms S., a drama teacher in a Toronto high school, noted: 'Drama is not an automatically . . . you know, safe and respectful and community space. You have to really work hard to achieve that, both as a teacher and as a class' (Gallagher, 2007: 141–142). However, despite the freedom of movement and the relative permissiveness of the space, or a teacher's good intentions to build community, there remains an important caveat with respect to the use of video in research, wherever that research might happen to take place. Susan Sontag presciently observed in essays *On Photography* (1973: 87), 'Instead of just recording reality, photographs have become the norm for the way things appear to us, thereby changing the very idea of reality, and of realism.' Like its predecessor the still camera, the presence of the video camera is anything but neutral: it affects that which it films, including, in this case, our relationship with the research participants and their relationships to each other and their space.

Pragmatically speaking, using video in qualitative research in a classroom setting requires a certain amount of flexibility on the researcher's part and a level of comfort with more improvisational methods. In the context of our research, with the consent of the students, we often videotaped the live performances and discussions that occurred in the drama classrooms. Despite having obtained their 'consent', we did not assume that the presence of a video camera was seen as benign by the students in the classrooms. We asked them to respond anonymously to the question: what was it like for you to have a video camera in your drama classroom? Their responses gave us pause:

I didn't move towards it at all, but I didn't move away from it either. I just accepted it being there. It was kind of making me feel nervous whenever I was videotaped. But I was OK with it when I was told to talk to the camera as if it was an interviewer. But I didn't like it being around

when I was working in groups. It kind of added more intimidation because everything that comes out of your mouth in group work is just off the top of your head. So I felt a little vulnerable when that happened.

Our performance was videotaped. While it was taped I felt as though it was another individual in the room. I felt it was like a completely different person, one who I didn't know. It felt strange at first, but as we went on I no longer noticed its presence; it was like it disappeared.

When the camera was in the classroom I really didn't care. I didn't want to be on camera, but I didn't care if I was. My monologue performance was not videotaped and I'm happy about that. If I memorized my lines then I would love to have it taped 'cause I looked cute that day.

With the camera situation, I didn't feel shy or insecure when it was on me because to tell the truth I like the camera and I don't mind being in the spotlight.

These responses speak beautifully to a point made in an essay comparing film and theater written by Walter Benjamin (c. 1997). He noted that when a theatrical performance is recorded/mediatized, the public becomes an 'expert' or impersonal judge: the camera is the critic. When the camera is perceived as a judgemental critic, the attitude of the viewer, then, becomes one of *testing*; he/she tests. Fittingly, film actors' auditions include something called 'screen tests'. The presence of the camera is clearly different from the presence of other live people in drama, with whom or for whom one is performing. In recent years, many efforts have been made in post-positivist, feminist, and post-colonial qualitative research to minimize the impact of the critical eye cast upon research 'subjects'. But as Dillabough (Chapter 10, this volume) argues, the 'scope of ethics' should not be limited to concerns with 'equal' research relationships in the present moment, but must also address the historicity of relationships. In our case, this includes the legacy of colonial ethnographic images that remain as a scrim – a drop curtain in a theater that appears opaque to the audience when lit from the front but transparent when lit from behind – reminding us of the historical images which have perpetuated unequal relations between researchers and marginalized others. How might researchers interested in using the potentially objectifying and, according to Benjamin, judgemental medium of video as a method entertain the host of historical ethnographic images that have come to represent unequal and imperialistic relations? How might they think seriously about changing the conventional terms of communication with the camera, in the present, in order to remain aware of such decontextualized historical images and extend, rather than inhibit, our relationships with research participants?

The aesthetics of research and the telling of the research story

French-Canadian playwright/actor/director Robert Lepage (1996: 146) likens the 'live' experience of theater to a sporting event. People scream and shout at a sporting event because they believe it may change the course of events. In theater too, he says, people want to believe that by their presence they are somehow changing the event; theater does not 'fix', like an image or a word captured by the 'objectivity' of the lens, the 'truth-telling' camera. The traditional function of the camera, then, is more akin to positivist notions of research. Aesthetically, it can be seen to be fixing a moment, freezing a relationship, 'capturing' a true picture. A primary challenge for post-positivist researchers, then, who choose to use video in their research, is to negotiate the research relationships in order that research participants are not merely testing and being tested/critiqued by the lens and the researcher, but *contesting* and returning the gaze. Another of our research participants was particularly eloquent on this point:

I felt OK about my performance being videotaped. I didn't realize I would be videotaped until I got on stage and began my monologue. When I saw it, it threw me off a bit. From that point forward, I avoided looking into the camera because I felt it isolated me, and was like a critic, waiting for me to fumble. I found looking at audience members a lot more effective. In their faces, I could see their reaction to my words, and find the incentive to deliver my lines as best as possible. So, I would say that I did not want to be videotaped. However, I didn't dislike it enough to request not to be videotaped.

In retrospection, we did not allow our research participants nearly enough time behind the camera, and we have learned that this is important both to the idea of distributing power and to the widening of the aesthetic and knowledge-producing sphere of the research. If the presence of the camera can change so remarkably the terms of engagement between researcher and participants, if it can move us, in fact, further away from a negotiated space or set of relationships, how might the researcher design methods that resist such positioning of the 'research subject' and the promise of a 'realistic' and linear narrative? One response to this dilemma requires a rethinking of the aesthetics associated with the camera's eye. Robert Lepage reflects upon these important aesthetic qualities when he describes the differences between theater as a 'vertical form' of art and film or television as a 'horizontal form':

It's vertical on many levels in the sense that I think theatre has a lot to do with putting people in contact with the gods, whatever that means. That's where theatre comes from. Plays were written in a vertical manner

about human aspirations . . . There is a sense of spirituality in theatre: it's a medium that you could use to talk about spirituality, about spiritual quests. Of course, there's a reason why film has a horizontal frame; because cameras pan and cinema is all about everyday life and realism. Being at that level it goes from left to right, or right to left. Sometimes it does pan up and down, but in general horizontal stories are better told with film. Maybe the shape and frames of film will all change one day. But why hasn't anybody invented a vertical screen after a century of cinema? The medium technically and symbolically is about the horizon, the land on which human beings work and walk.

(Lepage, 1996: 144).

Extending further this aesthetic metaphor, Lepage suggests that there are two ways to tell a story: a metaphorical way and a metonymical way. Metonymy is a horizontal telling – a beginning, middle, and end – with things happening in a certain order. But metaphorical telling is like seeing a piece of theater where there are many levels, where things seem to be connected in a 'vertical way'. What would it mean, methodologically, to design a study that connected people, their contexts and relationships, in horizontal *and* vertical ways? The question itself points rather obviously to the need for multiple perspectives (both digital and 'live') in the seeing and the telling of research. This is likely one reason why forms of literature, theater, and visual media have proliferated in the representation of qualitative research. These artistic forms enable researchers to evoke the nuances and complexities of fieldwork and other research activities. Over the last twenty years, ethnographers (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Ellis and Bochner, 1996, cited in Dicks *et al.*, 2005: 31; Fusco, Chapter 9, this volume) have been challenging the very conventionality of ethnographic writing. They argue for 'more open, messy and fragmented texts' (Dicks *et al.*, 2005: 31). Postmodern researchers, like Patti Lather and Chris Smithies (1997), have experimented with 'vertical' forms of reporting, while other researchers have exploited the vertical powers of theater in qualitative research dissemination (see Gallagher, 2006; Goldstein, 2003; Conrad, 2002; Saldana, 1999; Norris, 1997; Donmoyer and Yennie-Donmoyer, 1995; Mieniczakowski, 1995). But using digital video in our research challenged us, in a very fundamental way, to revisit our more habitual 'modes' of operating in the field. Dicks *et al.* (2005: 82) argue that '[t]he film-based ethnographer sees the field through the camera lens, while the writing-based ethnographer observes first, and then writes. The camera lens works to "enframe" the field into compositions, while the constantly moving human eye tends to organize it into scenes.' And even beyond the filming itself, the practice of video editing is particularly powerful in enabling us to 'see', organize, and analyze research data in new ways: '[Editing] rituals serve as a "frame" whose stabilizing effect experienced through repetition in cycles and in rhythmic recurrences allow us to see things with a different intensity, and

... to perceive the ordinary in an extra-ordinary way' (Trinh and Leimbacher, 2005: 135).

Returning to Lepage's thinking for a moment, one key to a post-positivist research methodology that combines the horizontal telling of the camera with 'the vertical' – or the 'enframing' with the more fluid organization by 'scenes', as Dicks *et al.* (2005) have put it – might be to design a research space with multiple camera operators (including both researchers and research participants), which would involve multiple camera perspectives and multiple readings of the 'data' produced. In practical terms, the 'multiple readings' could result in different edited versions of the video footage rather than a single 'final cut'. Groundbreaking video artists, like Nam June Paik, have been experimenting with 'vertical' video approaches that challenge the horizontal momentum and perspective of video. Feminists, postcolonial filmmakers, and scholars who are critical of the colonizing agendas of ethnographic film practices have been calling for more radically 'reflexive' approaches to film-making and research. Trinh T. Minh-ha (1991) has critiqued documentary and anthropological filmmaking's claim to represent 'truth'. She particularly deconstructs techniques that correspond to ideas of reflexive, 'truthful', 'ethical' documentary/research practices such as 'capturing essence', 'letting subjects speak for themselves', and 'not manipulating reality'. Such techniques include: long takes, the hand-held camera, wide-angle lenses, and anti-aestheticism (*ibid.*: 59). Poignantly, and suitably for qualitative researchers, she argues, 'What is constructed through the art of artifices should artfully display its artificiality' (Trinh and Kobayashi, 2005: 171). But the challenge is that this process should be more than simply making visible what is 'not there', which is akin to '[research and] works that seek to construct a positive image of a marginalized group' in the absence of critique (Trinh and Takemura, 2005: 153).

In research terms, then, to design research with an eye toward the 'vertical' would mean to ask research questions that have many potential answers contingent upon the relationships that are cultivated through the research and relationships of historical contingency across time and space. What might research look like if such postmodern, postcolonial, critical, messy, fragmented, ethical, and 'vertical' forms of research reporting were to emerge? Dillabough (Chapter 10, this volume), again, helpfully proposes the concept of 'analytic and methodological justice', especially in visual representations of research, so that we might better develop methods that more completely draw the line between historical representations of research 'subjects' and our ongoing ethical responsibility to more just institutions and more ethical methodological and analytic practices. Her call to explore historicity and temporality in the contemporary work we do invites us to develop methods of working in research that attend to historical images and research accounts in the public record that continue to circulate and be reproduced in new and equally repressive forms.

With the increasing use of video in many forms of qualitative research, it is clearly important to understand the aesthetic, epistemological, and ethical impact of video on research relations and knowledge production. Lepage argues that film is very ‘personal’, very ‘private’; it goes with the medium of close-ups, the things you do not normally see. It is not surprising that video has become such a successful tool of surveillance. And one also hears in this description the terrible echoes of colonial practices in early anthropological ethnographic work. In theater, he is arguing, the sources of inspiration are the people who are there with you, the ones who ‘help you out’. At the crux of theater, therefore, is communication, the need to see and hear with others: ‘The idea of theatre is first of all to bring people in a dark room and do the festival of light. Of course the fire of these [early] theatres was replaced by technology, by electricity, but people still come to the theatre to sit around the fire’ (Lepage, 1996: 157). However romantic and indeed humanist a notion this may seem, how one comes to sit around the fire has very fundamental implications for the production of knowledge and the potential for collaborative research. If we aim to use video in research – and we are arguing here that there is much to gain by challenging and expanding our usual repertoire of qualitative modes of research – then we must take seriously these metaphysical quandaries about the relationship of people to each other when that relationship is mediated digitally. Historically, the relationship between those in front of and those behind the camera has not been open to the kind of scrutiny we are suggesting is essential in a postcolonial research agenda.

Towards a digital video methodology: some considerations

If we conceive of digital video methodology as a ‘multi-arts/research activity’, a synergy between the two events of art-making and research, in which the sum is greater than its constituent parts, digital methods need to do more than simply record research activities. The common uses of video in research (as a recording device) tend to render human activity flat. But such methods also only exploit the recording capacities of video; they treat video as a technical tool rather than an artistic research medium.

The horizontal screen, for instance, might instead be seen as dialectical, through the use of multiple points of view (POVs) acting in and on the research site. The cameras might also be considered to be in a spatial relationship with research participants so that frames of significant action are selected and co-filmed by research participants. In addition to this form of collaborative ‘data collection’, analysis too could be multi-perspectival. The research videos would be viewed collectively and participants and researchers could then edit a version of each performance for a *Rashomon*-like⁶ analysis. This kind of experimentation would further create opportunities for integrating individual with group-based research and editing practices.

Artistically and substantively speaking, digital and non-digital forms of research produce considerably different pictures. The 'live' and unrepeatability of human interaction versus the recordable/reproducible nature of video is one of these more significant differences. Further, camera devices such as extreme close-up or wide-angle lens can isolate subjects and make it possible to analyze and see/hear research data in particular ways. With video, the various POVs are created by the camera operator, whereas in a live and unrecorded research interaction the control is more diffused. The POV of the researcher, however, like that of the videographer, is determined, in some measure, by where s/he is socio-historically and physically positioned in any given space. Within the context of a post-positivist research paradigm, it is not useful to aim to replicate what feels 'natural' or unobtrusive in a research site, as Trinh has warned. What becomes more critical is the researcher's consciousness of how bodies (including his/her own) are positioned relative to the space and the camera's eye. On a metaphysical level, POV is, of course, much more complex and depends on a host of other factors, including how one is positioned vis-à-vis the context, the content, and the people in the research event. And these 'live' factors always exceed what is possible to contain in any analysis, however multi-perspectival.

Video is also being used increasingly in the publication of research, including electronic journal articles where clips are either embedded in written narratives or accessed through a hyperlink to video files (Pink, 2001: 164). What gets included and what gets excluded when we use a video camera to 'make' fieldnotes? Do we focus on things with video that would not normally attract our attention? Are we looking for 'dramatic' moments? Is there a tyranny of the visual at work? Contemporary society is saturated with digital technology in which 'information of every kind and for every purpose is now mostly in digital form' (Gere, 2002: 10), and yet, 'empirically grounded, theorised knowledge of the full potential of digital technologies for qualitative research is still in its infancy' (Dicks *et al.*, 2006: 19). Further theorization about the effects of incorporating media, such as video, as a method of data collection and analysis in qualitative research is needed if multi-media research is to push beyond the novel and the experimental.

Possible directions for collaborative digital research

One possible way of addressing the full potential of digital video technology for qualitative research is to use video not only to portray but to create and analyze data *spatially*. Increasing attention is being paid, for instance, to the relationships between space, learning, youth, and social relations (Mitchell, 1994, 2002; Moje, 2004; Soja, 1996, 2004; Massey, 1998; Hull and Katz, in press; Hull and James, 2006; Gallagher, 2007). In a culture in which we not only capture images on video cameras but *are captured* by surveillance video

cameras every day, we would still argue that digital research methods may provide a space of possibility for engaging with these media in critical, aesthetic, and alternative ways.

Borrowing from Henri Lefebvre's (2000) conceptualization of space, we might conceive of research space as *representations of space and spaces of representation*. In Lefebvre's system of *lived* (representational spaces), *perceived* (spatial practices), and *conceived* (representations of) space, it is 'representation' that pervades all spatial experience (McGrath, 2004). Conceived spaces are those created by architects and city planners; lived spaces are those inhabited by members of a community; perceived spaces represent what inhabitants make of their lived spaces. Massey (1998: 124) has argued that when thinking, for instance, about youth culture in spatial terms, space is organized in terms of 'a vast complexity of interconnections'. For example, through the kinds of 'collective modes of production' (Halleck, 2002; Naficy, 2001) we have argued for here, researchers and participants might use video representations of their 'lived' or hoped for/imagined spaces for both analysis and the generation of new knowledge.

Qualitative researchers, as we have noted, have begun exploring new media, including digital video (Kim, 2007) and web technologies (Dicks *et al.*, 2005, 2006) to present their findings in very different ways. For instance, a recent, innovative initiative at the intersection of art and research that uses the World Wide Web as a medium for presenting research data is Katerina Cizek's work looking at inner-city health issues with doctors, nurses, researchers, and patients.⁷ Cizek works with film, photography, text (blogs), and an online immersive documentary. As with any new research tool, however, the ethical issues are beginning to emerge and require much further theorizing (see Kim, 2007; Dicks *et al.*, 2005).

Ethical considerations and unanswered questions

As the (colonial) history of photography/film has shown, there are clearly ethical dilemmas related to using video to 'show' and 'tell' research. These have primarily to do with the politics of representation, the power structures of relationships, and with the reproducibility of digital technology. Live human interaction is ephemeral, but digitizing research creates a record that can be altered and copied. Who gets to keep a copy of digital research records like, for instance, original video footage of a research interview? Who has the right to edit these? Where will the videos be shown and to whom? Who decides? Should ownership be collective and belong to the research participants and the researcher? These are, of course, questions that have already been raised by many feminist and critical scholars in the politics of research more generally. But the newer dimension of digital reproduction in research further complicates these already complex issues. What are the particular kinds of practices of inclusion and exclusion that can occur in digital research contexts? We

noticed, for instance, in our own research that gendered, classed, racialized, linguistic, and other inequities become particularly foregrounded in digital, as opposed to live, research modes. The visual mode and recording capacity of the camera intensifies issues of appearance, a particularly strong force of exclusion. Furthermore, because a video camera not only *records* but produces a lasting recorded *product*, its presence tends to favor a more product-driven approach and process. Recall the student's earlier comment about not wanting her group process to be recorded. In other words, the permanent record of aesthetic and interactive processes could calcify those processes and impede creative or more fluid interaction and engagement. How might we, then, take up Trinh's call to reveal the 'artifice' of the work, without simultaneously congealing the unpredictability and ephemera of human interactions?

Digital research methods can particularly intensify the kinds of inequity traditionally associated with gender and technology contexts. Teachers who have engaged their students with videomaking often comment that girls tend to be cast in administrative and performance roles, while boys more often find themselves in direction and production (editing, camera) roles. Issues of class and physical ability, too, are likely to figure more strongly in digital research contexts. Participants who have access to digital video equipment, and the physical skills required for filming, are more likely to be comfortable with the equipment, and therefore 'cast' in more 'dominant' roles such as producer, editor, camera-person.

In our research with video and drama in one high school site, there seemed to be an initial paralysis when students tried to imagine different narratives and alternative ways of using video that challenge dominant power relationships. As researchers, we were all too aware of the limitations of the particular frames we were creating around live interaction. And when we turned the cameras over to our research participants, they often also resorted to predictable framings of activities. In these instances, it is very difficult to 'think outside the box', as it were, when mainstream (classed, gendered, sexualized, and racialized) images of human relations permeate our lenses and our sensibilities.

Not unlike other forms of qualitative research, there are no innocent interactions, no unperformed, no 'original' moments. Bakhtin (1981) offers us a different way of thinking about this reproductive or imitative process, however: 'as parody, pastiche, intertextuality or dialogic communication – instead of merely imitation' (cited in Buckingham, 2003: 135). Bakhtin, here, is pointing to the importance of dialogue/intertextuality in both the 'capturing' of human interaction and the negotiation of its meanings. As Bordo (2003) has rightly insisted, 'simultaneously we can be both vulnerable and savvy to the empire of images' (cited in Stack and Kelly, 2006: 9). Youth, as we found in our study, can simultaneously be critical of and enjoy watching and making media narratives that appear to be in direct conflict with who they are. It is, of course, dangerous to view youth narratives as 'transparent . . . window[s] on youth's capacities, secrets, and problems' (Daiutte, 2000: 213).

First attempts at videomaking are not necessarily reflections of the stories youth find most interesting. As is the case for researchers, too, many different takes, exposure to diverse genres, and time are needed to build the skills, confidence, and relationships needed to 'risk' departing from mainstream genres and narratives.

As the earliest uses of photography, film, and video in research have proven, the presence and influence of colonial and dominant narratives loom large when visual media are used to tell a research story. The dominant genres, techniques, tropes, and archetypes that are ubiquitous in mainstream media, like continuous editing, the voiceover narrative, and 'talking-heads', can be seen as generic patterns ingrained in the fabrication of stories. Mainstream media representations of identity, and the ways in which stories are told, have come to colonize the imagination. How can we create new spaces of representation within our research settings in ways that push beyond the narrow boundaries of the conformist, dominant representations that occupy the academic and social imagination? Can the interiority of the lives of research participants or the sense of timelessness that often marks 'live' interaction be 'translated' to digital video modes? Can research that exploits digital modes of recording and representing avoid the pitfalls of the objectifying gaze of the camera? Can collaborative forms of research proliferate with the inventive and artistic use of video as a more collective rather than a hierarchical research process? Can digital video research expand the research imagination by evoking new postcolonial research narratives?

Lepage, Benjamin, Lefebvre, Trinh, and Bakhtin have helped us, here, to isolate some of the issues while they have also pointed in fruitful directions. Moving beyond the delight of the digital, the 'avant-garde' of new forms of research representation, critical, postcolonial, and feminist theory (see Boler, 2006, 2007; Kim, 2007) will help researchers who want to use video and other 'new' media in their work to develop a corpus of methods that attend to the complexities of research relations. No doubt these moves take us into relatively uncharted territory, where both the enormous creative potential and the dangers of reductionism and colonization loom equally large.

Notes

- 1 The work represented in this chapter is based on both Kathleen Gallagher's ethnographic study *Drama Education, Youth and Social Cohesion: (Re)constructing Identities in Urban Contexts*, for which Isabelle Kim was a graduate assistant from 2004 to 2006, and on Isabelle Kim's Masters (2003) and Doctoral (2007) research on publicly funded, community-based youth videomaking projects in Ontario, Canada. The authors would like to thank *Caribbean Quarterly* for permission to reproduce here some parts of an earlier article that appeared in Gallagher, K. and I. Kim. (2007) Contesting space and power through digital drama research: Colonial histories, postcolonial interrogations. *Caribbean Quarterly*, 53(1/2): 115–126.

- 2 The scientific-realist strategy of 'covert research' was rationalized on the basis that covert videotaping 'allow[s] researchers to produce images of an objective reality less distorted by their own subjectivity' (Pink, 2001: 41).
- 3 TV Maxambomba is a videomobile that visits the *favelas* (poor neighborhoods) of Rio every evening on different street corners – the video equivalent to Boal's forum theater (Halleck, 2002). In *Hand-Held Visions: The Impossible Possibilities of Community Media*, Halleck (2002) describes other similar initiatives that utilize drama, television, film, video, and the Internet from around the world.
- 4 *Machimina* is 'a form of film-making that uses video-game software to tell stories'. Alex Chan posted his *machimina* film *The French Democracy* (2006), inspired by the French riots (fall 2005) online. The story was picked up by *The Washington Post* and interest quickly spread around the world. Chan's film was screened at the Worldwide Short Film Festival on June 14, 2006, in Toronto. Chan used the PC software recently released by Lionhead Studios called 'The Movies', which provides novices with a full set of filmmaking tools and an easy system for posting the results online (Colbourne, 2006: R1–R2).
- 5 The three-year ethnography took place in four urban high school drama classrooms, two in Toronto and two in New York City. The research was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and is now published by University of Toronto Press as *The Theatre of Urban: Youth and Schooling in Dangerous Times* (2007).
- 6 '*Rashomon*' has become a codeword for the multiplicity/relativity/unattainability of truth. It is the title of a film by the illustrious Japanese filmmaker Akira Kurosawa (1950). The film examines a tale of rape and murder from four different perspectives (Wintonick, 2006: 15).
- 7 Cizek, with Peter Wintonick, also made the film *Seeing Is Believing: Camcorders and Human Rights* (2002). (To see the film and teachers' e-zine which includes study guides for understanding human rights and new technologies and participate in online forum discussions see: www.seeingisbelieving.ca.) The film 'document[s] how text-messaging on cell-phones became instrumental in the toppling of a president in the Philippines' (Cizek's blog, 'Video Cell Phones: The Fourth Screen', February 9, 2007, www.nfb.ca/filmmakerinresidence). Her work has also been selected for the Margaret Mead Film Festival in New York City. Cizek is the filmmaker-in-residence at St. Michael's, a large inner-city hospital in downtown Toronto. Her work is part of the National Film Board of Canada's (NFB) filmmaker-in-residence program, which was inspired by the NFB's well-known 'Challenge for Change' program that ran in the 1960s and 1970s.

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A measure of trust in an era of distrust

Informed consent meets critical analysis in the study of effective schools

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Qualitative, case study research on schools that are considered, by their peers, by their test scores or by the media, to be particularly effective has become popular for good reasons. It addresses a commonsense question to which both educators and academics would like an answer: what are these schools doing that makes them successful? It is based in an extensive and important scholarly literature that has been developed over time, dating back most notably to Edmonds (1979), a passionate, Afro-American educator who determined that schools could make a difference to children, especially poor and underachieving children. It provides a good-news story that congratulates the system on what it does right, instead of harping on problems. It also leaves room for critical analysis of educational practice as researchers explore in depth what is happening in a successful school.²

In order to carry out in-depth research on effective schools, researchers must work collaboratively, with the consent, cooperation, encouragement, and participation of educators in those schools. Because schools are chosen to exemplify some promising practices that keep students in school/raise their achievement, administrators and staff are likely to be pleased, rather than threatened to be included in the research. The relationships that develop under these circumstances are another reason for both sides to engage in the research. Academics can spend time in schools, coming to appreciate the language, the culture, and the pressures that teachers, students, and administrators experience. Educators can have conversations with academic researchers, getting close, appreciative but critical attention to and feedback on their work. Each side can develop new insights and open up opportunities for further collaboration and contact.

But there are also tensions and difficulties inherent in the project. Educators may well be skeptical of whether researchers really understand what it is like in the trenches, whether they can listen closely enough to what they are told and draw the appropriate lessons for their texts. Researchers may well be skeptical of whether teachers appreciate the value of arm's length research and scholarship, whether they are interested in change, or just looking for good publicity. Collaboration means negotiating politics; it requires building

enough trust that the project can continue, even while a critical analysis of the motivations and power relations of collaboration suggest there are many reasons for distrust.

There are also tensions around research methodology, for both practitioners and researchers have an interest and a role in the myriad specific local decisions that determine what becomes a 'case study'. How will schools be chosen? Who will be interviewed? What questions will be asked? How will the final text be written and what will it highlight? Although formal research agreements are worked out in an attempt to head off conflicts and meet the requirements of university ethics boards, they are, of necessity, based on some unstated assumptions and some implicit trust. In this kind of research, researchers must willingly embark on projects that we know have a shaky methodological foundation.

Schools agree to participate, but not all members of the community will have signed on. Interviews with parents, students, administrators and teachers are specified, but the questions and selection of participants are left open, an iterative process. Consent forms promise academic freedom to the researcher, but also give the principal/teachers/school board the right to review, comment on and sometimes change the analysis that is produced. There is ambiguity and perhaps contradiction that can be the source of plenty of dispute. But trust must be preserved in order for the research to prosper and continue, both in the particular project that is under way and in the future, as new opportunities arise.

As a researcher, I have gladly embraced the ambiguity and the shaky methodological premises of research studies that are collaborative, vaguely specified, and risky. I have come to believe that walking the tightrope of close engagement with schools is absolutely necessary both for researchers, who need to understand the world of schooling, and for educators, who need the reflective friendship that comes from academic partners. As Goodlad (1988: 4) puts it, 'the prospects for both individual and institutional renewal are vastly enhanced when the workplace is continuously infused with both the craftsmanship of those similarly engaged and relevant knowledge from both inside and outside the setting'.

In the two experiences I have had with partnership research on successful school practice, I have learned a huge amount about Canadian schooling; and the projects have, I think, produced useful accounts of the dilemmas and challenges of Canadian schools in particular times and places. But it has not been a simple matter. This chapter describes and reflects on both projects to draw out some of the key conflicts experienced during the research. There are no simple 'how-tos' here. But through discussion of the contexts and methodological designs of these two research projects, I hope to elucidate some of the dilemmas and conflicts that arise.

The literature on partnerships has two foci, which provide a focus for the discussion. The first is the value of clear agreements. Mitchell (2001) concludes

that negotiating a clear research agenda that gives appropriate weight to the needs of the field, although not easy, is important for success. Lang (2001: 122) asserts 'It is essential . . . that teachers and university researchers be honest and forthright about their expectations for the research project from its inception until its conclusion.' From honesty and forthrightness will come more productive relationships, and 'both school-based and university-based educators may also achieve transformative understandings about themselves and their profession through shared collaborations'. My skepticism about this is set out above: some ambiguity is not only inevitable but helpful in providing a base of agreement from which all may start.

The second focus is the problem of the differential power of researchers. LeCompte (1995: 105) points out that researchers may call educators their collaborators, but not afford them any actual power: 'Researchers define themselves as collaborators, but do not address how they might actually have silenced [participants'] participation . . . the issue of power is tiptoed past with the tacit, if mistaken, assumption that naming participants as collaborators makes them co-equals.' My skepticism here is based in an awareness of the fluidity of power and its contextual nature. Educators have certain kinds of power in these projects; researchers have a different kind of power. Researchers have some credibility around framing research methodology, and they have the resources to write up the cases, but practitioners provide accounts of the school, know the networks we tap into, and provide and block access to particular points of view. Researchers who do not share power are unlikely to do good research.

Complete clarity and honesty are unlikely, and power is never equal or located in a single place. In the real world of universities and schools, we work with misunderstandings, ambiguities, and different kinds of power and authority in different contexts. Agreeing to disagree, rather than requiring agreement, can allow the work to proceed. Negotiating the complex but promising terrain requires compromise and intelligence, politics as well as firm academic commitments, and it will sometimes fall apart. In this, as in every other domain of life, a sense of humour and a long-term perspective help all parties to move forward.

Canadian exemplary secondary schools

My first experience with studying successful schools was a project initiated by the Canadian government in the mid-1990s. The federal government does not often fund educational studies in Canada, because jurisdiction over schools is provincial, and provincial ministers of education do not want the federal government to 'interfere'. But in 1992, the economy was struggling, the media were claiming 30 percent of students did not graduate from high school and the prime minister announced a 'prosperity initiative' which focused on skills development. Studying secondary schools was part of a policy initiative to

ensure Canada's workforce was prepared to compete in an increasingly global and knowledge-based economy.

I chaired the steering committee for the research. Because of provincial sensitivities, the steering committee was made up of academics chosen to represent the diversity across the country, along with a representative of the federal ministry of what was then the Department of Employment and Immigration; we were further advised by a council of provincial ministries. After preliminary discussion of provincial school systems, it was clear that there was no shared view of how to define an 'exemplary school'. The literature was of limited utility, because researchers drew different conclusions from it. Canadian data on student achievement and retention were not consistent across the country and using them as a measure of success would not satisfy some researchers, even if they were available. In Quebec, for example, the ministry and the researchers articulated one view of success, based in academic achievement, while aboriginal communities and the aboriginal researcher in our group articulated another, based in cultural and social survival. It seemed unlikely that educators in Prince Edward Island would agree with those in Alberta, and that researchers in Toronto would emphasize the same issues as those in Newfoundland.

We needed to get enough agreement to carry out the research. Rather than articulating our own version of an exemplary school, we decided that the people on the ground, across the country, would articulate theirs. We would study examples of secondary schools that were considered exemplary in their own communities, and see what they had in common, and what we could learn from them. This would give us a picture of schools that were having an impact on very different communities across the country. We sent letters to a wide variety of community and educational groups in every province and territory, asking for nominations. We asked our respondents to name schools that were particularly successful, and we asked them how they knew they were successful. The result was a series of essays on school success which in themselves were fascinating documents.

The process of narrowing the field to a few schools we could study in depth was complex. Rather than using a single set of lenses, we decided to include different kinds of success in different contexts, representing the mosaic that is Canada. We shortlisted schools on the basis of the strength of the nomination, then we checked out the shortlist with local informants to ensure there was evidence of impact. We tried to ensure that we had both rural and urban schools, Catholic and public schools, Francophone and Anglophone schools, small and large schools, art schools and comprehensives, and so on. We also needed schools from each province and territory. The result was a jigsaw puzzle that turned up twenty-one schools, including a small school in an outport in Newfoundland, a rural school in Quebec, a Francophone school in Ontario, an alternative school for homeless youth in Toronto, a Catholic school in Ontario, an aboriginal school in a Catholic school board in Saskatoon, a school run by

a native band in Manitoba, a fine arts school in British Columbia, a northern school that taught partly in Inuktituk, and big comprehensive, multiethnic schools in Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver.

At each school, a team of researchers spent a year, on and off, interviewing, observing, handing out questionnaires, visiting the community, and coming up with a school report that had been discussed with the school community. We agreed that building networks and relationships was part of our mandate, that the result of the project would be not just a report, but new connections.

The research mandate was very broad:

Each report will attempt to unravel the mysteries of a school's success, understanding that schools are organizations (with particular structures, policies and decision-making mechanisms), learning environments (with certain approaches to students' and educators' development and change) and cultures (with specific norms, beliefs and working relationships). Data gathering in each school will move from question to data gathering to analysis to question over the course of one school year. This process is dependent on frequent and prolonged engagement at the site, as well as checking among researchers who are examining the same phenomena.

The research framework left much open to discussion at the local level, and different research teams developed different relationships with their schools. The result was different decisions and compromises in how they carried out the research. Three of us visited every school and every research team to understand how they were working. We held several national meetings to try to forge common understandings. We commented on many drafts of the final report from each school in an attempt to pull out common themes.

The ethics guidelines we had worked out specified that:

Copies of the school's report will be shown to the school before reports are released. Participants will be encouraged to comment on the report and will have the right to suggest modifications and withdraw any comments attributed to them if on reflection they feel the comments are damaging or inaccurate. If they wish to provide an alternative interpretation of the findings, this will be published along with the research team's report.

All the schools, understandably, wanted to provoke admiration, and be recognized as one of a few exemplary schools in Canada. Their actual names were being used. Some reports became accounts of how wonderful the teachers and administrators at a particular school were. Some included a good deal of critical commentary on curriculum, equity, community school relations, or leadership practices. As national research director, I tried to encourage some consistency, some critical commentary, and some demonstration of what was working well. My mantra was that no school is perfect, so no report should

suggest it is. A clear sense of the dilemmas and their temporary resolution would be more helpful than a report that washed out the difficulties.

In my own case study of an arts school in British Columbia, I was making constant decisions about what to highlight in our report and what its effect would be on way the school was seen. There were several groups who were very critical of what this school had become, and the criticism came from several angles. The teachers' union objected to practices of selecting teachers and students for the school, as it was a specialty school. Some of the founders objected to the lack of selection of students and teachers for the school, claiming it had lost much of its special focus. Teachers who cared about math and science felt they were being shortchanged in the curriculum; teachers who cared about the arts felt they did not receive enough support for concerts and performances. Each group saw the research as providing a voice for their concerns.

The final report came together without a major debate. The principal told me his first reading of the report kept him up all night, but he had relatively few suggestions for change. The report was not carefully read by a large number of teachers, and it was read by very few students and parents. We moved forward with a case study that was quite widely shared, but primarily within the research community.

At other schools, things were more complicated. An aboriginal school felt the report had not paid sufficient attention to the spirituality that underpinned the school's work; a new chapter was added by the researchers. A fine arts school was so concerned by the questions that visiting researchers had asked that it did not want the real name of the school used. We agreed, and provided a pseudonym, although we had said we would not.

As a researcher, I wanted changes in research reports that had no critical bite. There was resistance to the notion that all reports should address gender and racial equity issues, if the issues were not raised by the school. I felt we should have a checklist of issues everyone touched upon. As one researcher put it, 'Checklists leave me shivering, shuddering, shaking, vibrating, and most other forms of involuntary body movement.' Providing reviews and feedback by several external readers helped, but some reports remained a paean to a particular school, and sometimes to a particular principal.

The power of both the central research staff and the school communities was real but limited. The agreements were clear but very partial. The number of relationships destroyed by the process were far outnumbered by the number of relationships developed. The value of the research was not all it might have been, but it was substantial. The conclusion was a powerful but fairly vague statement:

What makes these schools and educators successful at present are ultimately their sense of being special, their alertness and discernment in reading the landscape, their imagination and energy in responding to

pressure points, and their competence and dedication in engaging their students in the pursuit of important ideas, valuable skills, and humane values.

At the end, we found it as hard to generalize about what Canadians believe it takes to be successful in schools as we had at the beginning.

Ontario's successful elementary schools

My second experience of studying successful schools focused on elementary education in Ontario. A provincial election in 2003 produced a new government with a mandate to invest in public education. The premier defined a series of goals related to student achievement, focused on increasing province-wide test results:

The government is committed to making improvement in publicly funded education the centrepiece of its mandate, starting with improved student success in literacy and numeracy . . . Progress will be measured by ensuring that by 2008, 75 per cent of students reach the provincial standard of a 'B' or Level 3 on province-wide reading, writing and math tests – up from the slightly over half that are reaching this marker today. We are addressing this as a first priority because we respect both what is at stake and the significant capacity building required to succeed.

(Ontario Government, 2004)

The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat was the locus for action at the elementary level. It had new resources, it wanted partnerships, and it was committed to evidence-based practice. As a memo from the deputy minister of education (Levin, 2005b) stated:

The Government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Education, is dedicated to promoting and fostering a productive and collaborative relationship amongst educators, researchers, and policymakers to fulfill its commitment to improving the public education system for all students . . . Promoting the use of evidence-informed policy and practice in education reflects the government's commitment to improve student outcomes.

It was in this context that our effective schools project was born. Senior school district staff in two contiguous and large school districts in the Toronto area had some experience with research on successful practice. They saw an opportunity to collaborate, to raise the profile of improvement efforts in some of their tougher schools, to extend their own research, and to produce a legitimate way to make best-practice recommendations to struggling schools. OISE's

new Center for Urban Schooling wanted relationships with school districts and research focused on the issues facing underserved and underperforming populations. This project provided some visibility for the center, along with some funding for faculty and students to immerse themselves in local schools facing 'challenging circumstances'.

The final proposal was called 'Improving Student Achievement in Schools: Facing Challenging Circumstances Project, a Project in Partnership between Two Toronto Area School Boards and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT)'. It cited the need for more 'in depth case studies of effective schools in difficult circumstances, and richer descriptions of the leadership practices within these schools'. It also stated that:

Each partner will have an essential role in the project. The School Boards will each identify successful strategies in 10 of their schools. OISE/UT will carry out the project including consultation with project management and school teams.

Strategies will be identified and resources developed that would make this learning transferable to other schools and school districts across the province.

The proposal cited the earlier work on exemplary secondary schools (Gaskell, 1996) but there were clear differences that went beyond the shift to elementary from secondary schools. The schools were chosen by the districts, not by the researchers. The study would take place much more quickly, with one day of research in each school, not one year. There would be a substantial effort to turn the results not just into text, but into web-based materials for professional development on effective practice. The instigators of the project were the school leaders, and the researchers had less autonomy. Like the exemplary secondary schools project, the research had the power to convene a group of people with different intellectual and political agendas and several goals in mind.

As the research began, there were innumerable particular decisions and dilemmas about how to proceed. Some decisions were taken centrally and affected everyone. We would administer questionnaires. We would spend one day in each school. We would study an equal number of schools in each district, despite the differences in district size and poverty rates. But many decisions were taken locally, either by the research team or by a researcher, by the school boards or by a director, by schools or by a teacher, by those who were developing professional development materials or by the web designer. In this complex environment, those who were around to do the work had a large impact, while everyone managed to get some, if not all, of what they wanted. Each of us faced up to the necessity of getting things done, trying to ensure that our critical voice was heard while keeping our relationships respectful and strong.

One of the ironies of the project is that the provincial government already had a published and official answer to what makes schools successful. It was articulated in a document from the Education Quality and Accountability Office (see EQAO, 2005a and b) and reflected the government agendas. This document says that successful schools create professional learning communities, view EQAO assessment as a team responsibility, practice data-driven decision-making, take a whole-school approach to literacy, numeracy, and student achievement, receive board support for professional development, engage in small-group learning for language and mathematics, exhibit high-quality teaching and parental involvement, connect mathematical concepts and real-life situations. The list of specifics is extensive and reasonable for the most part. The web-based materials coming out of our research were going to illustrate these directions, in one way or another.

One of the superintendents primarily responsible for the study had written a thesis on six elementary principals 'whose practices were seen to be successful by the school district' (Belchetz, 2004). She conducted telephone interviews for one to two hours with the principals, and interviewed eleven teachers and six parents. The conclusions were that principals should be leaders of instruction, and transform the culture of their schools. Six features of good leadership were identified: focus on student outcomes; articulating this in a planned and deliberate manner; supporting and empowering teachers; building positive relations with parents and community; fostering a safe and supportive learning environment; and projecting an encouraging and motivating attitude. The web-based materials for the school board were likely to emphasize these directions, in one way or another.

One of the researchers had been involved in research tracking school improvement through the use of a questionnaire, the School Life Survey (Ross *et al.*, 2003). The scale measured factors like the clarity of school goals, shared decision-making, positive attitudes to school change, positive school culture, teacher learning opportunities, connections between school and community, belief that the administrative team provides a supportive climate, and use of data-based decision-making. The items included, for example, 'teachers in this school really believe every child can learn', 'professional articles and journals are rarely circulated among staff', 'leaders in this school promote an atmosphere of caring and trust among staff', all scored on a six-point scale that had been shown to be reliable, useful in its feedback, and related to school improvement. The research was going to use this questionnaire, which had been shown to be useful, and would further the research agenda surrounding the questionnaire.

These partly conflicting but not necessarily antagonistic agendas were brought together in the case studies we undertook. The timelines were tight, which limited discussion. The school visits were sometimes strongly shaped by the principal, but in each case researchers felt they heard some interesting things, which illuminated challenges as well as successes. The analysis and

writing phases were accelerated, and some might argue bypassed, in order to inform the design of web modules to publicize the project's lessons.

Tight research choices (random selection of teachers and students to interview, survey to all teachers) were combined with loose ones – it was not clear why the districts had selected particular schools, especially some where the socio-economic data did not indicate extremely challenging circumstances and test scores showed no dramatic improvement. We collected surveys and analyzed them carefully. We formed questions that all groups would use. We carried out a complex multi-factorial analysis of the interview data along with the survey data, defining new clusters of characteristics that characterized our schools. This brought research credibility to the findings, but political and research criteria were employed in odd ways to serve both groups.

The districts were concerned about leadership, and particularly about the recruitment and professional development of principals. Several researchers were concerned about school–community relationships and the implications that a rapidly diversifying school population was having on the schools we visited. We asked about both issues and the reports we produced allowed us to speak to both.

Underlying it all were differences in our views of how well the schools were actually succeeding. Understandably, the principals who read and approved the reports wanted glowing accounts. In some cases the interview data had made the researchers very skeptical. Wordsmithing papered over some of the cracks, but chasms were visible underneath.

The modules on the web deal with six themes: literacy capacity, using data, distributing leadership, building parent–community relationships, relationships beyond the classroom, and professional learning. They reflect an emphasis on the professional development of principals. To quote the conclusion on the ministry website:

The leading and learning research project collected data on successful leadership practices in schools facing challenging circumstances. Six learning modules have been developed based on the themes emerging from the study. While the themes that emerged from the study were seen to be evident in the practices of the schools in the study, it is important to note that not all practices were identified in each of the schools. Through the study of participating elementary schools from two districts in Ontario, the modules provide theoretical foundations and practical examples of leadership approaches evident in these schools.

Another, quite different account of the research appeared in a magazine for Canadian School Trustees (Kugler and Flessa, 2007). It recounted 'some troubling patterns we noticed among principals during a recent research project'. The article goes on to comment on how striking the focus on literacy was in every school, reflecting the provincial policy, and how frequently the

schools experienced an inability to connect with their communities. 'For a principal driven to raise test scores, making connections outside the walls of the school may seem to hold little measurable benefit, when benefit is narrowly defined.' The concerns of Kugler and Flessa echo Kugler's lifelong commitment to community engagement in schools, and Flessa's skepticism about top-down leadership. But they cite the experience of principals in Ontario in 2006; they craft their argument based on what they heard, then transmit it to new audiences.

Another methodological dilemma was how generalizable our results are. Case studies are strongly contextualized. They use observations and interviews to reveal understandings in a particular school at a particular time. They are based on the assumption that schools will be different from one another, and that these differences are important. Case studies are written to show the specific, contextually shaped ways in which different schools with different definitions of 'challenging circumstances' ensure different kinds of 'success'. It was the case study reports that I found most interesting, and that we worked on carefully in order to illuminate and not offend a local school community.

On the web, where the conclusions of the project are made available, the importance of context is highlighted by a tab that says, 'importance of context: start here'. The final report and the professional development modules, however, moved in precisely the opposite direction – in drawing cross-case conclusions they looked for communalities in the talk across schools and in the surveys of schools. They highlight a handful of categories and characteristics of school life that emerged across sites.

The interviews and cases are used to illustrate general themes. These general lessons are strikingly related to the ministry's agenda, as well as to the researchers motivating concerns, but they are informed by the study. The six modules are closely related to those identified by Belchetz earlier, in her thesis, in her publications on the principals' changing role (Belchetz and Leithwood, 2007; Belchetz, 2004). They are also related to Ross's work on school improvement, as embodied in the questionnaire. But the conclusions were informed by a complex data analysis carried out using both survey and interview data as well as by the case studies.

The findings of this research were not new or earth shattering. But the relationships and local knowledge developed in the process were useful.

Conclusions

In the Canadian context, there are specific moments when educational researchers have the opportunity to engage with governments and school districts to build knowledge about what might improve schools. These moments are particular: they occur when there is a political interest in education, and when academic approaches and contexts can be harnessed to

them. There are many potential benefits to this work, in developing knowledge and relationships, but its complexities, which involve the politics of methodology, require a flexible approach and a willingness to make political compromises.

Disagreement over the allocation of resources, the analytical focus, the timelines, and the conclusions is not an unfortunate misunderstanding about methodology that can be 'resolved'. Instead, the politics of collaborative research is the medium through which any useful or productive partnership work will ever be conducted, and trust must ultimately be forged. As Levin (2005a: 17) puts it, 'Planning for knowledge use also has to involve the development of longer-term relationships with users.'

No collaborative research project exists apart from politics, and political disagreements cannot be resolved before the research begins. Competing interests, goals, purposes, and incentives shape every participant's engagement with the research project at every phase, and partnerships that are founded on the false idea that there will be *one* consistent or coherent set of goals not only naively over-promise what partnerships can accomplish but set in place the potential for disillusionment and cynicism that can reaffirm the intractability of the very 'great divide' between researchers and practitioners that the partnership was supposed to address.

These misunderstandings between researchers and users do not arise because people are stupid or venal, but from the realities of their contexts. The research practices so often decried in government, such as esoteric language, long time-lines, and unwillingness to state conclusions definitively are embedded in the social organization and reward structures of academic work. Similarly, governments do what they do, in the way they do, because powerful forces and incentives drive them in those directions. If we do not understand those forces, we are likely to have highly simplistic notions about improvement. Of course improvements can and should be made, but these efforts should start from a realistic understanding of why people act as they do and what kinds of changes might be possible.

(Levin, 2005a: 2–3)

In both of the projects I have described, researchers compromised what they would have preferred in the way of autonomy, methodological rigor, qualitative depth, and analytical nuance to get resources for their research, access to schools, buy-in from governments and districts, an audience for the findings, and influence on professional development. Labaree (2004: 74) raises questions about these kinds of tradeoff and identifies some of their consequences. He suggests that conducting research that will be more palatable and accessible to policy-makers sometimes means casting a methodological net so widely that

conclusions are 'less valid and reliable'. But academic researchers in education need the support and understanding of educators, and educators need the critical lens of researchers. The distrust of academia by school-based practitioners is a problem for schools and for faculties of education. Research needs to be considered useful by the field, if we are to garner public and professional support for it to flourish. The kind of society and educational system we want to bring about, one that is open to discussion and thoughtful about what constitutes good practice, depends on some trust between researchers and educators.

As a recent blog by Timothy Burke (<http://weblogs.swarthmore.edu/burke/>, 2007) points out, hostility to academia has many roots. It is based in the sorting function universities perform, personal experiences many have had as students, combined with a distrust of expertise widespread in populist and democratic societies. 'Academics are a lightning rod for popular frustration with expertise: we're the most concentrated and visible institution dedicated to the production and circulation of expertise even when our institutions may actually be antagonistic to the more snake-oil kinds of expertise in the wider society (policy wonkery, pseudo-science, consultancies, and so on).' The expertise we offer is useful; it is often critical of the current professional understandings of educators; it must be tempered with humility, respect for other views, and an awareness of the particular place from where we speak.

Notes

- 1 Parts of this chapter derive directly from a paper I wrote with Joe Flessa on effective elementary schools in low-income communities in Ontario (Gaskell and Flessa, 2007). Conversations with Joe about school effectiveness, partnership research, and the schools in challenging circumstances project have informed my thinking and my writing, and I am very grateful for his help.
- 2 That there are problems with this kind of research is also clear. Most obviously, in not looking at schools that perform poorly, the research does not demonstrate the effectiveness or the distinctiveness of the practices it documents. But this chapter is not a debate on the value of the research. Rather, it explores the process of doing it.

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Finding form for curriculum research

Madeleine Grumet, Amy Anderson,
and Chris Osmond

The lure of method lies in its putative logic. It offers us a system and a way into the world. The *Oxford English Dictionary* traces the word to its Greek root, which signified the pursuit of knowledge. It draws the distinction, however, between this meaning and its sixteenth-century descendant, rhetoric: 'Methode hath beene placed, and that not amisse in Logicke, as a part of Judgement; For as the Doctrine of Syllogismes comprehendeth vppon that which is inuented. So the Doctrine of Methode contayneth the rules of Judgement vppon that which is to bee delivered' (Francis Bacon, 1605 (*Advancement of Learning*, II, xvii)). So in this Enlightenment version of method, the pursuit of knowledge is conflated with legitimation, the ability to justify the pursuit and its findings to others. The point is made cogently in this *OED* citation of Charles Hutton, in the context of mathematics: 'Method is the art of disposing a train of arguments in a proper order to investigate either the truth or falsity of a proposition, or to demonstrate it to others when it has been found out' (Charles Hutton, 1837 (*Course Math*, I, 3)).

This passage from knowledge to persuasion tacitly acknowledges the social construction of knowledge, a phrase which researchers and scholars blithely utter in a compulsive repudiation of idealism and dogmatic claims to truth. But having stated the obvious, we are left with the problems of the social construction of knowledge:

- the distractions of tradition;
- the desire for approval;
- the influence of ideology;
- the boundaries that separate discourse communities.

In this chapter we will discuss methods of research and their integration within two research projects. Very often, methodological dilemmas in qualitative research address the gathering of data, the status and viewpoint of the researcher, her relationship to the people who are the 'subjects' of her inquiries, and the relationship between the university and the communities that are the

ground of the study. These concerns have evolved to recognize and respect the autonomy, privacy, subjectivity, situatedness, and agency of other people. The problems of the social construction of knowledge that are named above apply to all these considerations of the relationships between the researcher and the researched. The discussions of curriculum research which follow this introduction speak of relations to other people, but they also recognize that the concepts and literature that inform their studies are other and are burdened by tradition, ideology, and the boundaries that separate discourse communities. Finally, there is a process of defamiliarization that takes the interest and perspective of the researcher as other, recognizing her vulnerability, partiality, and overdetermination. And so the methodological dilemmas that we will engage involve not only the social and ethical issues of gathering data but the relational character of thought and understanding.

A final citation from the *OED* addresses these complexities: 'We see that all men naturally are able in some sort in accuse and excuse: Some by chance; but some by method. This method may be discovered: And to discover Method is all one with teaching an Art' (Thomas Hobbes, 1681 (*Art of Rhetoric*)). So it is Hobbes who names the project of research in curriculum theory and the topic of this chapter. I (Madeleine Grumet) will begin by discussing the kinds of understanding that curriculum theory seeks and then suggest the art of the research that attempts to address them. This introduction will be followed by essays written by Amy Anderson and Chris Osmond, who will examine the discovery of method in their own recent research.

Curriculum theory

The theoretical study of curriculum strives to make its ideological foundations explicit, for even the academic disciplines are highly specific and historic cultural inventions. I sometimes think of curriculum as the world in drag, festooned in the codes and structures of our history. First there is the somewhat arbitrary selection and ordering of experience in the containers of the disciplines: this is science; this is history; this is literature. Then there are the modes of inquiry proper to each discipline: this is how we investigate the physical world; here is how to make sense of a story; these materials provide evidence for history. And once the world is folded and cut, pieced and separated in these ways, it is again recoded as it enters the ceremonies, structures, and rituals of schooling.¹

Curriculum theory research is connected to *curriculum* and this means that this complex, layered, and enacted phenomenon is the thing to be studied and understood. So research in curriculum theory has at least three strands:

- First, *the study of the curriculum phenomenon as a cultural object*. This means that the topic, whether it is whole language literacy, arts integration, or hands-on science, is recognized as a cultural object with a social history,

anchored in ideology and nested in layers of meaning that call for clarification and interpretation.

- Second, *the study of the curriculum object as an event*. This means that curriculum happens, in schools, every day. It is a transaction that takes place among teachers and students, administrators and school boards, legislators and federal and state agencies. This is a strand of ethnographic research that strives to grasp the lived experience and meaning of curriculum to these actors.
- Third, *the study of curriculum in the perspective of the researcher*. This means that the consciousness of any scholar who has been schooled is itself saturated and shaped by curriculum. Curriculum inquiry requires a recapitulation of the researcher's own history of experience and associations with the object to be studied.

Although I have listed these strands as distinct and ordered in the work we will describe here, they are intertwined, interrupting, augmenting, contradicting, and illuminating one another.

Furthermore, these three themes run through the work of teaching. In a moment that is saturated with stipulated curriculum, displayed in interlocking matrices, and scripted and scheduled teaching, it is often hard to think of teaching as embedded in cultural history, in autobiographical meanings and reflections, and as an actual, happening event. Nevertheless, we maintain that even scripted, timed, and measured instruction is saturated with these meanings.

In these conceptions of curriculum and teaching, method is simultaneously a form of praxis and a process of inquiry. In the late 1980s, in a piece prepared for a conference on qualitative inquiry in education, I tried to distinguish the method of qualitative inquiry in education from both art and science, and even though I agree with Emerson (1893: 57) that 'a foolish consistency is a hobgoblin of little minds', I will, hoping not to be foolish, repeat a passage from that essay:

Neither science that denies connection, nor art that displays connection, can design the relation to the world that I struggle to achieve. For I am neither an artist nor a scientist. I am a teacher. Here is the difference. Teaching simultaneously performs the connection of art and practices the so-called abstention of science.

(Grumet, 1990: 102)

I still maintain that teaching displays our relation to the world and invites students to become engaged with the object of our intention in the magical mimesis that good teaching inspires. But I also argue that the abstentions and distancing of science are important if we are to think of that relation to the world in new ways both for our own development and to welcome the

diverse experience of our students. Finally, autobiographical reflection joins art and science as we recover the history of our relation to the object to be known better to imagine how we might position it for our students' apprehension and interest.

This hybridity challenges scholars who are trained in our universities to specialize in and master particular methods of inquiry. To study curriculum as a cultural object invites the study of history, tracing the cultural evolution of the topic at hand. It also invites a philosophical study of the meanings of the salient issues and assumptions that inform and shape the conceptual ground of the study.

To study curriculum as an event invites the anthropological and sociological traditions that inform social research. In our time, these protocols are intertwined in ethnography, an attempt to capture the situation and to portray it from the perspectives and understandings of those who act within it.

To study curriculum through autobiography requires both recapitulation and reflection, the art of narrative writing, and the practices of abstention informed by phenomenology or psychoanalysis that make interpretation possible.

Clearly, any of these approaches could be completely consuming. Engaging all of them means that each is subject to the critique and correction of the others. But these are the negotiations that constitute educational practice. Often educators are accused of repetition compulsion as issues of schooling, ways to teach reading or mathematics, funding systems, and the curriculum itself are debated as if they were new problems every seven years or so. But because curriculum encodes our relationships to the world and to each other, it is necessary that in this dynamic world, communities take up these issues repeatedly as they choose the curriculum that will reveal the world to their children.

And so, when this approach to curriculum research works, it reveals new ways of thinking about both curriculum practice and curriculum scholarship. It is hard to get to the new; the old paths are so much more accessible, and you know where they will lead. In their dissertation research, both Amy Anderson and Chris Osmond took up issues of curriculum and teaching that are not, at first glance, new. Amy was interested in teachers' rejection of theory: 'we just don't speak the same language'. Chris was interested in the experience of teachers who depart from the standard course of study, who teach 'off the grid'. Their work, however, recapitulates the dynamism of curriculum and teaching, and reveals new ways of thinking about old issues that are constantly changing.

The reflections of method that we are presenting in this chapter evolved as we worked together on their research. I think it was clear that the three strands described above would constitute the method(s) of this work. Had I been a professor of more recent vintage, perhaps I would have proposed one method, or maybe two. But I have been doing this work for some time now. When I began, I was intent on bringing humanities methods into curriculum research, and worked with Bill Pinar to develop a method and a justification

for the analysis of autobiographical narratives of educational experience.² Over the years the approach to that analysis has deepened, informed by ego psychology, object relations and psychoanalytic theory, postmodern theories of the self, and social action. And alternating with this scholarship was the lure of the event, drawing me into administration, where I could *do* things, and repeatedly into schools and into the study of performance and ritual. I offer this brief biography to confess the history that has led to this conviction that curriculum and teaching research needs at the very least these three strands; this conviction also extended into my interest in multiple methods of inquiry as requirements for larger studies.

The process that all three of us needed to be patient with was the unpredictable sequencing and surfacing of the strands. It was not possible, as Amy Anderson will argue, to separate them neatly, setting out with theory as a presentation of organizing concepts, going on to the ethnography, and then rounding it off with a little personal note. Instead, these three ways of looking kept reappearing. It is a little like losing your keys. You do not just check your pockets. You also go from room to room and check the car. Then you recapitulate the day's events, the stores you went to, signing the credit-card slip at the bookshop. Maybe you phone the office, or the box office, or your neighbor. And often one of these inquiries sets off a set of associations that corrects the others and you find the keys in a place where you looked earlier but saw nothing.

And so my role was that of a somewhat perverse shepherd, encouraging my students not to stay on the path, but to double back, stray, and at times make a break for it. They were very patient with me. We write this chapter in the hope that through this joint effort we can make this method more clear for its future practitioners without making it methodical.

Finding speech for the refusal to speak (Amy Anderson)

Language is the medium of our work in education, guiding the delivery and exchange of information in classrooms and between and among various other discourse communities, including academia and school administration. How thinking about language might help us think about – and think differently about – teaching and education is my research, with a particular focus on the languages and language situations in which teachers understand their practice.

In this project, I discuss insights from my dissertation research that studied teachers' encounters with various languages of education. During the course of my graduate study, I worked as the teaching assistant for a cohort of eighteen elementary and middle school teachers pursuing a Master's in Education for Experienced Teachers (M.Ed.) degree. While reflecting on experiences of language in the M.Ed. program as part of a 'Teacher as Researcher' course I was co-teaching, one teacher observed that a significant difference between

educators at the university level and those in public school classrooms is that 'we just don't speak the same language'. This difference of language was named by the teacher – with her colleagues' general agreement – as a critical factor that interrupts teachers' access to the academy. This was not, however, a simple recapitulation of the theory–practice divide, for their primary concern was that the languages of the academy failed to generate adequate connections to *teachers' work*. Teachers thought that there were occasions when faculty seemed too invested *in the words*, failing to give adequate time to exploring the concepts behind the words. In these instances, languages of the academy frustrated teachers' desires to delve into complex classroom issues. It is important to note that this sentiment was not limited to the 'theory' classroom; 'methods' courses also disrupted conversation when research-based justifications of a strategy trumped teachers' experiences of the strategy. The appeal of these experienced teachers was to lift discussions out of the theory versus practice debate in a way that contextualizes and honors their passionate commitment to children in classrooms, and in a way that contextualizes and honors their discourse. 'We just don't speak the same language' lived with me over the next few months, reverberating with my own interests in language. After their graduation, I invited members of the inaugural cohort of M.Ed. alumnae to participate in an interview study to explore the confrontations of languages within education.

I was drawn to and challenged by what I perceived as these teachers' resistance to languages of the academy, because as a student and scholar in education I was, and am, seduced by language. I believe language seduces in its intimations, for within language I find challenge, promise, and the hope of something more. For me, language beyond the everyday – beyond the most 'accessible' (Lather, 1996) or obvious usage – facilitates more communicative and imaginative access and pushes us toward something more. In the best sense, it expands the horizon of what we imagine as possible and teases and tempts us in that direction. But language is also subject to reductions, ellipses that limit our engagement with the worlds it describes. This reduction can be a literal abbreviation of concepts that troubles our understanding of particular words or concepts (as in the excessive use of acronyms and abbreviations), or a reduction that compromises our access to the imaginative possibilities of language, as when language is presented as static and unchangeable.

Paulo Freire (1990) named these reductions of language, these refusals to speak, 'limit situations', limitations that separate us from our activity and the world. These limit situations operated in multiple contexts in this study: teachers' resistance to the languages of theory – and the professors that hid behind them – when they failed to understand classroom complexities; professors' resistance to the languages practice that presumed to act without recognition of any basis in theory; my resistance to speaking for teachers when it came to making sense of our interviews; and the emergence of another significant interlocutor in these language games, namely the administrative languages that have become so significant to the practices of teachers, faculty,

researchers. Thus, the languages of education are the text of my research, the quest of finding speech in the face of refusals to speak clearly recursive in my work.

In framing the study, I drew on *theories* of research that I believed useful for understanding language in teachers' lives, primarily anthropology, phenomenology, and feminist poststructuralist theory. Anthropology informed the work inasmuch as it was a study designed to understand the experiences of a cultural group, in this case teachers. Because I was interested in understanding the concept of language, and understanding meaning made through language, phenomenology informed the work. Finally, feminist poststructuralist theory informed the work by tempering the humanist underpinnings of the other two, as I joined traditions that talk back to patriarchal narratives, what Elizabeth St. Pierre and Wanda Pillow called 'working the ruins' of foundationalism (Davies, 2000). Each of these perspectives was in keeping with my interests in language. A feminist emphasis attempted to '[focus] on the possibilities opened up when dominant language practices are made visible and revisable' (*ibid.*: 179). Davies goes on to explain the importance of this focus:

By making visible the ways in which power shifts dramatically, depending on how subjects are positioned by and within the multiple and competing discourses they encounter, they can begin to imagine how to reposition themselves, realign themselves, and use the power of discourse they have to disrupt those of its effects they wish to resist.

(*Ibid.*: 179–180)

I had these theories of research in mind when I proposed the study, during data collection in the form of in-depth group interviews, and as I began to analyze the interview transcripts. The task was to make power and positioning visible, and thus revisable. At the point of analysis, however, I encountered the limitations of my training and of traditional forms of description. Although captivated by the something more I encountered and hoped for in language, I found myself in my own limit situation, reproducing norms and forms of research that masked complexity instead of revealing it. Reading early drafts of analysis chapters, it was clear that the work was flattened by an overreliance on description and an absence of 'so what?'

The conventional model for dissertation writing maintains significant influence in education. Particularly for quantitative studies, but in qualitative ones as well, we resort to the familiar: an introductory chapter (Chapter 1); a review of the literature (Chapter 2); a description of research methods (Chapter 3); data analysis (Chapter 4, maybe Chapter 5); and finally, implications and conclusions (Final Chapter). Each element may be necessary to demonstrate a student's expertise and theorizing in the field, but we seem to be bound by forms that reduce themes to their description, dividing 'findings' from their 'implications'.

And so I began. Drawing on register theory (see Lemke, 1994 and Heath, 2000), I began by coding sections of transcripts along several domains, including the community or communities named (e.g., teacher–teacher, teacher–student, teacher–administrator, teacher–university faculty); the action described (e.g., belonging, resistance, anger, defiance); and teachers’ positioning (e.g., as authority; maternal; as objectified). The trouble was that while these categories *described* teachers’ languages, my interest was in *understanding* how thinking about language helps us think about teaching and education. It was at this juncture that my experiences as a researcher, my obligations as a colleague to the teachers, and my interests in exploring the ways language helps us imagine – and reimagine – the world came into conflict. Understanding required a different lens, but I was ill-equipped to abandon conventional training and move toward interpretation, for that move seemed to risk overwriting the teachers’ language with my own.

I have come to understand that my dilemmas *as researcher* echoed the dilemmas I believe the teachers encountered, dilemmas borne of the confrontation between learned behaviors and expectations in the face of authority – for students, for teachers, for women – and resistances that develop over the course of years and experiences. In the case of this work, learned acquiescence to the authority of theory confronted acquired resistance to that theory that speaks ‘to, for, about’ and masks complexity, and anxiety about the authority of autobiography confronted the sublimation of self-knowledge. To provide context for these dilemmas, it is necessary to know that I believe that no matter our postmodern condition, schools are largely relics of modernity that value epistemological certainty (Harvey, 1990), authority, and truth writ large. Universities are sites of confrontation between the modern and postmodern, but schools of education are tied to conditions in schools, endlessly negotiating between the lived and imagined experiences of teachers, students, administrators, and parents. And in spite of the positive possibilities I find in poststructuralism, I am also entrenched in practices and expectations of modernity.

And so, as students, as teachers, and as women, we learn that acquiescence to the authority of theory, suspicion of the authority of autobiography, and acceptance of the authority of practice are the preferred positions. As a student and researcher, assuming the authority of theory is one process of induction into the academy. Optimally, the course of study admits a student’s agency when encountering theory, space for her to choose among possibilities, and this has been my experience. With regard to research, the typical stance in my training was to assume a position along a recognized continuum of research methods that expected description and displaced the researcher and her biography at the moment the participant speaks. The perspective of the researcher appears in Chapters 1 through 3 of the dissertation, named as one’s positionality vis-à-vis research participants, guiding literatures, and choice of methodology, but bracketed at the point that participants speak so that

interpretation rests with the reader, not the researcher. Teachers, too, confront authority. In the course of this research, for example, teachers described encounters with the authority of administrative languages, the authority of academic languages, the authority of curriculum, the authority of practice. Challenges to authority are seldom welcome, especially when they are perceived to interrupt progress toward the grail, standardized achievement. And yet, in spite of the demands of authority, I resisted, and teachers resist, our displacement by meta-narratives or meta-theories that confound or negate experiences. But as researcher, and as teacher, how might one find speech for the refusal to speak when the refusal to speak is not an option? It was the introduction of curriculum theory as method that provided a way out.

The framework introduced at the outset of the chapter, and that Madeleine helped me consider during the course of this study, requires a hermeneutical stance. In this work, the languages of education serve as the cultural object, event, and project. Hans Georg Gadamer (1984) describes hermeneutics as putting texts in conversation with each other, looking for instances of congruence as well as contradiction, asking questions of texts and 'reaching behind' texts in an effort to increase and amplify understanding. In order to move beyond the flatness of description, thinking of interview transcripts as texts allowed me to read them as stories that in turn recalled other stories – from education, social theory, anthropology, psychoanalytic theory, phenomenology, and literature in particular. These are the primary texts in my library; others' libraries would necessarily lead to the selection of different texts. Teachers and other readers would likely choose different texts to bring into conversation with this data and would likely find different meanings as a result of their texts and their own lived experiences.

The shift to interpretation, however, signaled an uncomfortable moment for me in the trajectory of my research, for this move – performing hermeneutic interpretation – in some ways broke the conversational compact that tied and ties me to the women in the study. Nevertheless, moving beyond the text of our conversations and bringing other texts to bear allowed me to participate more fully in this process. The more interesting questions redirected attention from the instances and descriptions – teacher identity or agency, for example – to the interpretive and performative possibilities of language. This kind of interpretive work can help us consider alternatives to received languages of education.

Thinking of language as a cultural object and as event also added complexity to analysis that might otherwise have been limited to instances and descriptions of teachers talking to academia and academia talking to teachers in a recapitulation of work in 'teacher thinking' and 'personal practical knowledge' research. Donald Freeman (1996) names one critique of teacher thinking literatures that is salient for this study, arguing that teacher thinking research assumes teachers' language is isomorphic to thought. John Willinsky's (1989) critique of personal practical knowledge literatures takes issue with the

practice of studying teacher language in isolation from the larger educational communities of which they are a part, thereby stripping language of its context. The understanding advanced by teacher thinking and personal practical knowledge research masks complexity of the work and teachers, for what of teachers' thinking not represented in language? And what of teachers' positioning among other discourse communities that are so influential to practice? For we know that teachers' lives and interests extend well beyond the classroom doors; and at the same time, what happens in the classroom is subject to politics and policies beyond a teacher's control.

Following one line of interpretation, I came to understand the issue of 'we just don't speak the same language' as a problem of betrayal, with teachers and professors disappointed by each other's choices. Teachers are betrayed by professors' repudiation of the public school classroom; professors by teachers' resistance to theory. I came to see these responses as borne of the accuser's passion: the professor's presumed love of theory and the teacher's presumed love of the child. Neither of these presumptions, of course, is as simple as it seems. The comparison of their passions can be represented in the figure below as they correspond to Lacan's Imaginary and Symbolic Orders.

In Lacanian (1968) theory, the Symbolic Order represents assumption of adult Law; the best alternative to the Real (to which we have lost access based on our entrance into language), the Symbolic Order is the place we are all trying to reach, our 'proper place in the world', as it were. Entrance into the Symbolic Order means severing ties to the 'oceanic, illusory fusion with maternal life' (Atwell-Vasey, 1998: 49), the realm of fantasy, feelings, needs, and wants characteristic of the Imaginary Order. The arrangement I suggest reveals my bias against the patriarchal bias of Lacan's orders, for in this description I privilege the Imaginary as that which we want most and resist leaving.

When the teacher–professor relationship is framed as a binary, the teacher's needs and wants are directed to the child; the child is the Imaginary. The academy then becomes the Symbolic Order, the thing she *should* want. From

	Imaginary Order Realm of fantasy, of feelings, needs, and wants	Symbolic Order The authority of symbols; entrance into the social, paternal world of Law, rules, and conventions
For teachers	Represented by child	Represented by theory
For professors	Represented by theory	Represented by child

Figure 8.1 Lacan's Imaginary and Symbolic Orders

the professor's perspective, again following the binary, the Imaginary is theory, while the Symbolic is represented by the child. As the Imaginary, theory represents the professor's wants, the locus of her attention. In this scheme, the child symbolizes the Symbolic responsibility to the specifics of practice that denies a professor's access to the Imaginary. In this framework, each is left to resist the other's 'adult' world because of what must be left behind. This oppositional construction is the inadequacy of this model, for in fact it creates artificial binaries, artificial distance, artificial choice. There *is* a politics of interaction in the university classroom that is organized by the binary (i.e., professors 'bring' theory; teachers 'bring' the child), but allowing the binary to be the only frame for the interpretation of this relationship masks the ambivalence of both professors and teachers for the choices they make. It is likely that the choices made by the other make each anxious about their own choice, so we need models that complicate the binary.

Tapping into the rich history in which language is the cultural object, I turned to Kristeva to call attention to all that we may forsake when language is reduced to the functions of the Symbolic Order. To enrich our language, to enrich the world, requires following Kristeva's (1984) course and recognizing our indebtedness to both the Symbolic *and* Semiotic Orders as they mutually constitute signification. The importance of this interaction between the semiotic and the symbolic cannot be overstated when considering contemporary cultures of education. Attending to the semiotic, to affect, and to potential space may allow us to talk back to the overdetermining effects of the Symbolic Order that would overwhelm our commitments and interests in children, *and* in theory. For Kristeva, the semiotic and symbolic are mutually constitutive, and such a representation begins to disrupt the overly sentimental constructions that reduce teachers' interests to children and professors' to theory. Thus attending to the semiotic allows us to reach for the imaginary and repopulate languages of education with relation.

The importance of this interaction between the semiotic and the symbolic also cannot be overstated when considering research in education. The introduction of the semiotic as a lens for analysis in my research process allowed the salience of concepts to come not only from descriptions of how teachers are positioned in relation to other symbolic bullies. As a researcher, opening up to the semiotic, to hermeneutics, allowed me to reexamine my own assumptions about 'we just don't speak the same language' and see the complexities of teachers' positioning among multiple discourses in education. If my initial read was to position teachers and the academy in a binary opposition, attending to theories of language, particularly Kristeva's explication of the semiotic, required me to continue to populate the presumptive dyad with other significant interlocutors – including students, families, friends, and, significantly, administrators – in ways that complicated and enriched my understanding of teaching and researching and the politics they entail.

Finding form for the refusal of form (Chris Osmond)

I began my career in education as a jazz band director, trying to coax coherence out of the attempts of others to rise to the challenges of making music. It required the navigation of the tension between what I heard and what I wanted to hear, and it was my daily task to work out what to do when my projected coherence and the reality of my students' performances did not match. My means of trying to bring reality and desire into synch was communication focused on the semiotic as well as the symbolic elements of expression, to twist Kristeva's (1980) construction. While music is not a language, having no denotative properties, discourse *about* music is language, and I would reach deep into semiotic meaning when the symbolic failed me (which was often). Neologisms would be created that only had meaning within the confines of the practice space; the singing back of a part ('scatting', in the parlance) would require language consisting more of rhythm than symbolic referent. Most of all, I would find myself at the edge of symbolic potency quickly and be left to the semiotic register, reverting to echolalia of rhythm, gesture, and movement to make meaning as I came again and again to the limits of language. Where words failed me, the body leapt to fill the gap (Vernon, 1979).

This dissonance between what teaching was supposed to be and what I found it actually was – the way the map of teaching dissolved into the territory of lived experience – became the theme that obsessed me through graduate school, and when it came time to choose a research focus it welled up as the only thing I *could* write about. Teachers in the early twenty-first century work in a heavily regulated environment, perhaps the most monitored milieu of any era in American public education. The passage of the No Child Left Behind Act ushered in an era of assessment and accountability of student achievement never before attempted. Empowered by the unprecedented technological possibility of monitoring and comparing student achievement on standardized tests state- and nation-wide, policy seeks a more direct connection to data than ever before. North Carolina led the charge for data-driven education, and the compulsory standardized tests that its students take to demonstrate their achievement are among the longest-implemented tools of the accountability movement. It followed, I postulated, that the impact of teacher decisions upon student achievement was of greater interest than ever before, and that enthusiasm for controlling those decisions led to an increased interest in dissemination of teacher practices that can be demonstrated as effective through replicable, randomized control trials. Accompanying the focus on evidence-driven accountability is a companion movement to delineate precisely what learning teachers and students should be held accountable for in the North Carolina Standard Course of Study, our state's specification of the objectives to be attained in all public schools in grades K-12.

I reasoned that we could think of the North Carolina Standard Course of Study as a grid of objectives and expectations within which the daily work

of public school teachers in this state takes place, a grid that lists objectives along one axis and benchmarks of when competence in each objective is expected to be developed along the other. Overlaying this grid on a specific content area is much like overlaying a grid on a topographical map: the grid defines both itself and the spaces between its lines. It becomes possible to rationalize what it will be like to cross that terrain, to gain a sense of perspective and scale, to begin to make decisions about how you might embark upon your journey. But the map is never the territory. Part of a teacher's work is 'navigating the spaces' – figuring out what exists on the actual ground between the lines and making up how best to traverse that terrain with her students as it becomes visible.

Thus my project became a shared inquiry with three public high school English teachers into their experience of the 'grid' that rationalized schooling and the ways that they worked in the 'interstices' of that grid. The elements of life that are 'off the grid' – the parts that don't belong *to* school – nevertheless find their ways *into* school (or, as a teacher once told me, 'just because you don't give a student a break in the middle of the morning doesn't mean he won't take one'). This sense of the interruption of institutional needs by personal ones was my meta-theme, and I embarked upon my project hoping to hear the language and experience of my colleagues as they labored in their own personal ways within our shared regime of regulation. I drew credibility and validity from promiscuously diverse literatures, noting the threads of my theme in every place where people and institutions clashed. Psychology gave me the notion of ego repression and sublimation (Freud, 1930; Kris, 1952), sociology the understanding that states see only those aspects of those who constitute them that lend themselves to rational planning (Scott, 1998), and literary and performance theory the exciting definitions of *jouissance* as something inchoate and raging that could infuse life with unexpected and terrifying passion, a constant threat of dangerous pleasure that could make even boring stuff feel worth doing (Barthes, 1985; Fink, 2002; Kershaw, 1999). All of these discourses gave me language to work within, bright lights I could shine upon the experiences of my colleagues and research partners so that they too could begin to understand the insoluble tensions within which they pursued their avocation.

Is it too much to invoke the contours of my former life in a high school jazz band and as wide a literature as I could muster when trying to account for the research process of finding form within the stories of my research subjects? These were all projects that demanded reconciliation between posited form and unruly reality, and were also endeavors in which connotation was a more compelling way of evoking meaning than denotation. In the world of research, like the world of teaching school, the denotative register is the final arbiter of value, and so the work itself constituted nested dilemmas. How was I to maintain semiotic richness while signifying adequately in the symbolic realm? How was I to explore a theme as personally resonant as this one without

overwriting the experiences of others? And how was I to accommodate the possibility that what I found in the stubborn singularity of the practice of teaching might not fit whatever structures I had built, or inherited, to house them?

I sought symbolic form desperately as I worked with the three teachers who were my co-researchers. They told me their experience of my research questions, and I worked to make what they said fit into the symbolic structures I had built from the theories that had so rhymed with my own experience. I was usually adrift in a sea of possible meanings that would begin to cohere, only to overwhelm my structure with their complexity. My notes began to look like an alchemist's, with ball and stick diagrams describing possible interrelations I hoped to reduce from the raw stuff of my teachers' experience. Research – even research as personally relevant as mine was to me – seemed at core a simple enterprise. One went into the world to find evidence to support relationships one suspected existed; if what one found did not support those relations, then one adjusted one's hypothesis and proceeded accordingly in a straightforward stimulus/response dance of assay and accommodation.

But invariably, anxiety and tension would follow new interviews that brought forth information that did not cohere within my structure, somatic responses to the irritating remainders left over when I ran my simple algorithms on the real-life figures my teachers were giving me. Only by reconstructing my formulas so the meaning came out even was I able to relax again into a confident role of researcher with well-tempered data. At one point I fixed my computer to show me drafts of different chapters in different colors, so eager was I to be comforted that an order existed within these stories; I wrestled them into symbolic submission by dressing them up in party clothes so everything matched. Invariably I would need to start new chapters to account for new colors that would emerge. Invariably my structures would metastasize into unwieldiness as the urge accurately to denote what I thought I was seeing succumbed to the mapmaker's desire for fidelity and legibility, resulting in a map almost as large and complex as the terrain it purported to abstract and rationalize (Borges, 1946).

In retrospect, of course, these misfits were inevitable in the process of exploring curriculum as it is actually experienced, and I propose in hindsight that the misfits fell into (at the risk of once again doing violence to reality in the name of order) three types. First, the cultural history of curriculum has a reifying effect that ultimately stultifies efforts to articulate it, and even notions of 'transgressive' curriculum work have hoary antecedents and inviolable traditions that can render them as rigid and impermissible as the 'mainstream' constructs they purport to contradict. That is, notions of 'transgressive' teaching are as overdetermined as the notions of 'mainstream' practice. When I cited exemplars of such practice from real life (Dennis Litky, Jaime Escalante) and film (*Blackboard Jungle*, *Mr. Holland's Opus*, *Dead Poet's Society*), I failed to realize that such examples also cohere around a monolithic, antiestablishment

persona, one as ultimately limiting of what one's practice could signify or how it could be experienced as any mainstream one. As any punk rocker knows, the counterculture also has its rules, and breaking them will dissociate you from their orthodoxy as quickly as from any mainstream polity. Thus, my notions of how teachers should experience their 'outsider' status often failed to obtain when I tried to use them to account for the substance of lived practice. Even when my teachers acknowledged the structures within which they worked, none of them made instructional choices that conformed to my monolithically rebellious persona of the freethinking teacher. Most of my teachers' choices to work despite their structures were quiet decisions, known only to them and occasionally their students. The actuality of situated experience conformed to neither broadly defined mainstream nor contradictory practice. It had to be something else, and naming that something steered me repeatedly away from untroubled notions of 'mainstream' and 'alternative' into the stubbornly uncategorical realm of actual lived experience.

Second, curriculum's status as an event that happens every day, nested within the lived realities of the transactions among teachers, students, parents, and several levels of administrative stakeholders, proved too much for my attempts to frame it with theory even after owning its situated nature as a precondition to theorizing it. One of my teachers understood well the meaning of '*jouissance*', and even knew my prized 'transgressive' literature as well as I did from her previous life as a graduate student. But despite this well-evolved common ground – despite the alarming shared experience of words denoting and connoting the same meaning within both of our minds – we rarely found the thing we sought within the actual lived reality of her experience, however hard we tried to find it. The daily sameness of curriculum in school failed to yield the precise phenomenon we were sure we would find, and after several failed 'fishing trips' we were forced to concede a mismatch between what we both hoped to find in the daily reality and what we did find. This was, of course, itself a conclusion: a yielding to daily sameness, a kind of experience gathered in the absence of what you went looking for. It ran counter to the research tradition of persisting until finding some semblance of what you seek, but that yielding was ultimately the way to make peace between tradition and reality: to accept the quotidian reality of what is there, even if it stubbornly refuses to be either structured or fulfilling of the research question.

Finally, I came to understand in my bones how claiming ethnographic detachment not only lends validity to research's claims but relieves the researcher, letting him 'off the hook' by (putatively) granting the luxury of removing his own issues from the act of observing and making sense of what he observes. It is easier to be an 'empty eye', and even when you set out *not* to be one, you tend to wish to be one anyway. Even though my researches clearly sought to avoid a classic ethnographic detachment by virtue of my owning my autobiography and my investments as part of my research method, the stubbornness of such claims to detached reportage proved much harder

to slip than I had anticipated. The allure of owning ‘detachment’ is the same as the allure of believing your categories to be accurate and exhaustive: both lull one into a sense that what one has described or theorized has been fully accounted for, that one’s hand has writ and, having writ, can move on. Thus, when I found my negative judgement of one of my teachers’ instructional decisions welling up, I buried it in my researcher’s detachment rather than naming it and ‘writing through it’. The result is that as I look back on my descriptions I see my biases peek through, however hard I tried to discount them by pretending they were not there. It was easier for me not to name my personal reactions to what I regarded as poor pedagogical decisions than to own them and work them out. The result of my failure fully to account for my own perspective leaves its traces all over my finished work, perhaps visible only to me but a none the less persistent reminder of the poor fit between reality and research that results from incomplete separation from the confounding dictum of detachment.

In retrospect, the notion of ‘dynamic form’ (Langer, 1957: 47–48) seems to shed light on the challenges I was up against as it explores the qualities of the most interesting (my word) organisms:

An organism, which seems to be the most distinct and individual sort of thing in the world, is really not a *thing* at all. Its individual, separate, thing – like existence is a pattern of changes; its unity is a purely functional unity. But the integration of that functional whole is so indescribably complex and intimate and profound that the self-identity of the higher organisms (that is, the most elaborately integrated ones) is more convincing than the self-identity of the most permanent material concretion, such as a lump of lead or a stone . . . you can photograph a waterfall with just an ordinary little camera, if you stand back enough, just as you can photograph a house or a mountain. The waterfall has a shape, moving somewhat, its long streamers seeming to shift like ribbons in a wind. But its mobile shape is a permanent datum in the landscape, among rocks and trees and other things. Yet the water does not ever really stand before us. Scarcely a drop stays there for the length of one glance. The material composition of the waterfall changes all the time; only the form is permanent; and *what gives any shape at all to the water is the motion* [my emphasis].

The notion of dynamic form – the coherence that makes a waterfall more compelling to witness than a stone – begins with the realization of the existence of internal rhythms, conditions in which the completion of one distinct event appears as the beginning of another as surely as the denouement of each breaker of the ocean against the beach is the beginning of the next one. In living organisms, rhythms also pulse, but they are rhythms intimately connected to one another, internally coherent but all but inscrutable from

outside the system. The limits of understanding simple ‘periodicity’ as rhythm are apparent if one tries to understand any one rhythm as emblematic or denotative of others. Rather, in higher organisms, internal and external interactions and reactions with the world develop into complexly organized qualities that we know as human – intuition, imagination, reason – infinite in their richness and none the less coherent. Just because their internal machineries are not easily laid bare, that does not mean they are not unified. But their complexity resists symbolic iteration; as Vernon (1979: 19) says, the ‘world resists language’ as the limitations of tidy hypotheses are revealed time after time, joining other inadequate models in the dustbin of inadequate rationalities.

But language is what we have to complete research projects, and so language was used. However, my language came to depend upon its semiotic functions as well as its symbolic ones as I mined my own experience for illustrative valence as assiduously as I did my theoretical literature. Like I did when I ran a jazz band, my ability to describe what I saw ran out fast, and my subjective, somatic, pre- and post-rational understandings of the world jumped in to fill the void. Just as I ‘scatted’ nonsense syllables to communicate the rhythmic unity of a passage of Monk, so did I conjure meaning from a teacher’s story with the substance of my own interiority as it manifested in narrative and subjective associations. My work succeeded most fully in the places where I was able to honor the semiotic elements of the story I found, divesting it and myself of both personal desires for transgression and sexiness and inherited notions of objectivity in the name of telling fully what I found as it mixed with what I had hoped to find.

In my project’s conclusion, I termed this relationship to experience ‘living in the stuff’, taking a tip from my advisor’s assertion that ‘what we share with students is the human project, which no one can escape, of transforming the stuff around us into a world we share through the action of our intentionality’ (Grumet, 1988: 124). My research taught me that acknowledging the role of one’s pleasure in one’s teaching is a way to be ‘in the stuff’ of school. It is to acknowledge the sources of those pleasures when they arise, to seek them out and cultivate them by way of honoring one’s own appetite for pleasure in teaching. Part of this pleasure is the acknowledgement of the intrinsic pleasure of ‘stuff’: the distinctly embodied pleasure of working in a medium, of sensing its yield to your touch, of judging your next gesture based on the result of your last through the cycle of doing and undergoing that is artmaking (Dewey, 1934). To interact in this way with stuff is also to acknowledge oneself as stuff; accepting one’s twinned state as body and mind, and sometimes to lead with the body; ‘to be, therefore to think’. To be ‘in the stuff’ is also to understand the structure of one’s discipline as ‘stuff’, to develop mastery of both its ‘complicated’ and ‘complex’ nature and develop the knowledge of how best to share that structure with one’s students. Being ‘in the stuff’ of reading and writing means remaining a student in thrall to the subject even while

functioning as its teacher. The teachers with whom I worked remained authentic students of their discipline, commenting on the evolution of the writing process and the unfolding of a writer's craft as it is read to their students. Their reflections helped me to see that I too was a student of my content when I was its best teacher, and the added resonance of that subjective experience helped articulate the pleasure it afforded them and affirmed the worthiness of the subject as a focus of attention for their students, inspiring their engagement through example.

Finally, I concluded that to be 'in the stuff' is to acknowledge the ambivalent nature of one's role in the classroom, the play of authority, power, and pleasure that informs choices teachers make as to how they will perform themselves 'in role'. To understand that, as a teacher, one is 'cut from the cloth' of the school, and that one's practice inevitably works in concert with that provenance, is to acknowledge that, ultimately, the teacher's 'stuff' is not the same as the student's. These teachers' experience provided perspectives on how one's relationship 'to the stuff' is wedded to one's relationship 'to the grid'. They described experiences of investing their own 'stuff' into the curriculum, of allowing their own authentic experiences to commingle with those of their students through the projects – of reading, of writing – that they share with them. Consonantly, my own willingness to commingle my 'stuff' with theirs enabled me to invigorate their reflections with its resonance with my own experience, resonance that leapt to finish their stories as the body rushed in where words ended.

This evocative strategy was as justifiable – as *essential* – to teaching as it was to research, since my ability to denote rationally ran out long before my ability to perceive complexity did. And so my most successful writing of this research came to be shot through with my own stories, the semiotic utterances of my own reality pressed into service to flesh out the symbolic codes of the one we curriculum theorists share. The hybridity of my approach enabled me to illuminate the question, and express its answers, in ways inaccessible by either approach alone.

And so structure would evolve in an effort to write the waterfall, not the stone. I finally settled into a chapter sequence and coherence that could well have been another with world enough and time ('it might not done,' went a joke among my fellow writers, 'but it is due'). And to admit as much is not to disavow the responsibility of the researcher to establish coherence, but rather to continue to own in completion what I learned in process: that the richness of the data and the ineffable glory of its own integrity is done greatest reverence not by establishing its validity and reliability, nor by insisting it be what you feel it should be, but rather by conceding its ultimately organic unity and learning from the process of describing its constellation of interrelations, evocations, and resonances. The best way I could do this was to own my language's semiotic and symbolic elements, recurring to the latter where the former failed me as I resorted to my body to continue signification even where

my words ended. What is left is the synchronic residue of a diachronic process, as ultimately incomplete an evocation of the actual experience as a photograph of a waterfall; a process frozen in a moment, proofread, and bound between covers to be judged an adequate approximation of what was learned. But, like the waterfall, it could have looked different. And it does not diminish the effort to admit as much; rather, it praises the waterfall.

Reprise

One of the assertions of phenomenology is that subjectivity and objectivity are mutually constituting. What this means is that our encounters with the world (objectivity) expand our thoughts (subjectivity) which in turn permit us to extend our notice of the world, and so on, in an ever widening spiral of experience.

The phenomena of these researches – teachers' repudiation of theory and the relationship of teaching to the grid of accountability – might have been rendered in any one of the three registers of this method: phenomenon as cultural object, as event, or as autobiography. But if Amy Anderson or Chris Osmond had made the monological choice, I contend that they would have wrenched curriculum out of its lived world to study it as if it were something else.

What goes on in school has a social and political history and either phenomenon might have been approached on these terms. Amy could have studied the place of theory in teacher education and the discourses of curriculum practice. Chris might have traced the path of accountability practices from their development in military culture, through corporate culture, to their adoption by aspiring governors and educators. What goes on in school is an event, situated in a particular place and time, and either researcher might have provided a descriptive rendering of these practices as they emerged and were articulated in the moments and conversations of teaching. What goes on in school provokes the memories, confirmations, and repudiations of all of us who still go to school, and Amy or Chris could have interrogated their own stories of theory and rebellious creativity. But, taken by itself, not theory, nor event, nor autobiography can render the rich encounter with the world and with other people that is curriculum.

Because every child must be taught, we make the world anew, over and over again for each generation. Sometimes we think that re-creation is unnecessary, as if we could recycle 1940s reading or 1980s mathematics. In that conception, content is static and can be delivered in the right package, like the classic Coke bottle, again and again. But nothing is static, and as any teacher will tell you, every child and every minute carry the possibility of newness. So curriculum as event must be part of our method. But it is, perhaps, the most dangerous part, and both Amy and Chris risked getting mired in their thick descriptions.

Curriculum takes place in schools, but it is a part of the world. Its temporality is linked to the working lives of parents, to the just-in-time rhythms of production and marketing. Its spaces are pieced and folded in a world with boundaries of class, and gender, and hierarchies of all sorts. And in every moment of instruction echoes of enlightenment epistemologies fill classrooms that resemble households or churches. Curriculum theory explicitly recognizes these relations and returns curriculum to the world, interrupting its putative exile in schooling, but the world is wide and deep, and selecting its relevant themes is a daunting task.

Finally, curriculum takes place in us. None of us approaches the school for the first time, and our past experiences fund our interest in change. The very energy that frames our question can blind us to its answers. Acknowledging our own presence in the phenomena to be studied can create anxiety that either silences us or invites compulsive self-justification.

So we turn to all three registers to study curriculum that interests us, as a part of the world, and an event taking place in the lives of teachers and students. We do not aim for balance, for that would suggest a serial display, ordered around some logic of fairness, or turn-taking. We aim for conversation, with each register augmenting, challenging, and modifying the others, hoping to make sense of curriculum as curriculum makes sense of the world.

Notes

- 1 For some years I have thought that my metaphor for curriculum, 'the world in drag', was my invention. Recently, however, I have discovered Husserl's (2003: 154) use of this metaphor: 'Mathematics and mathematical science, as a garb of ideas, or the barb of symbols of the symbolic mathematical theories, encompasses everything which, for scientists and the educated generally, *represents* the life-world, *dresses it up* as "objectively actual and true" nature. It is through the garb of ideas that we take for *true being* what is actually a *method*.'
- 2 In 1975 William Pinar and I wrote *Toward a Poor Curriculum*, a book that made the argument for the analysis of educational experience. It was republished by Educator's International Press, Troy, NY, in 2006.

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Part III

Representation and bodies

‘Naked truths’?

Ethnographic dilemmas of doing research on the body in social spaces¹

Caroline Fusco

Dilemma; a situation in which a difficult choice has to be made between two or more alternatives, especially ones that are undesirable, from Greek dilemma (di ‘twice’) + (lemma ‘premise’).

(New Oxford Dictionary of English, 1998)

How does one manage to live in such a place where desires for the ‘naked truth’ will not do?

(Lather, 2007: 17)

This chapter will use a case study of research on women’s and men’s locker rooms to highlight the larger methodological dilemmas researchers may confront when doing work on the body in social spaces. Researchers invariably face ethical reviews and institutional constraints with respect to university reporting procedures that may be at odds with the researchers’ own sense of ethical responsibility. In this regard, institutional ethical procedures are not separate from the larger cultural context in which they exist, which both fears and oversexualizes the body (see Cover, 2003). This creates a significant set of dilemmas for the researcher who is concerned with investigating the body in ways that do not simply reproduce biologically and culturally over-determined views of it. Informed by poststructuralist and postcolonial epistemologies and methodologies, I also consider the dilemma of writing research that is constituted through disciplinary desires for authentic, original research and is constrained by the ‘burden of the story-truth’ (Trinh, 1989). Poststructuralist and postcolonial researchers resist modernists’ claims to ‘truth’. But it is a challenge to present research evidence in such a way as to make substantive commentary about social and spatial practices without reinscribing what Foucault (1972) called ‘claims to presence’. Does engaging in certain kinds of methodological processes – triangulation, self-reflexive writing, interviewing, transcription, photography – move us closer to or further away from the ‘messy text’, which Denzin (1997) suggests should be the outcome of poststructuralist research? Is accuracy sacrificed in the production of so-called messy texts?

In addressing these dilemmas of 'body research', I consider, in particular, the methodological acts of 'capturing' the body in social spaces through interviewing and photography. Since 'capturing' the body and space in (two-dimensional) written or visual texts ensures, to some extent, that discursive and material disinfecting and cleansing take place in the transcription to text, how, then, does one represent the stories and (three-dimensional) materiality of the body and space in writing? When interview communications and the messy materialities of bodies are reduced to signification, does this textual representation annihilate lived body space and render it a mere abstraction? The body's corporeality, encountered in social spaces, is often invisible in the research product because it cannot be easily rendered. How can we theorize, contextualize, and empirically represent the body and space? And can we do so without fragmenting, fetishizing, objectifying, or exoticizing corporeality? Concomitantly, how does the poststructuralist qualitative researcher productively reconceptualize the body without either obliterating it or reifying it as 'natural', autonomous, and somehow 'outside' discourse? Researchers who are examining the body as a site of cultural and social relations will always confront methodological dilemmas as they strive to destabilize the hard, firm masculinist lines of (disembodied) knowledge.

In this chapter, I discuss three binaries that presented the greatest methodological dilemmas for me. These are:

- Dilemma 1: The truth is out there/There is no 'truth';
- Dilemma 2: Body space is flesh/Body space is text;
- Dilemma 3: 'Readerly' texts/'Writerly' texts.

While I am cognizant that working within binaries in poststructuralist research is problematic (Lather, 1991), I do so in order to draw attention to the paradoxes that have structured my work. Lather (2007: 77) states: 'Such attention to the collision of humanist and posthumanist assumptions in efforts to voice and make visible can help us move toward the sort of double practices that prompt a rethinking of the research imaginary.'

I will offer to researchers concerned with the representations of bodies in space some innovative methodological processes and analytical strategies for representing the discursive and corporeal aspects of bodies in social spaces, and for working alternative paths through each of these dilemmas. These methodological 'solutions' pay particular attention to the partiality of the subject and of space, and productively disturb the logocentric representations of bodies in social science research. In what follows, I will look at the methodological dilemmas that I confronted in my research on the body and locker-room space. I do so to demonstrate that thinking about research means being always open to recognizing alternative paths between two seemingly opposite choices.

The 'burden of the story-truth'

Dilemma 1: The truth is out there/There is no 'truth'

[A] temptation to tell the truth should be just as carefully considered as a temptation to tell a lie.

(Shaw in Frye, 1964: 136)

The anthropologist, as we already know, does not find things; s/he makes them. And makes them up.

(Trinh, 1989: 141)

Theoretically, feminist poststructuralists and postmodernism theorists have recognized the contingency and indeterminacy of the cultural work we produce, and the problem of making 'truth claims' about particular phenomena (Haraway, 1988; Lather, 1991, 2007; Smith, 2005; Trinh, 1989; Weedon, 1997). This is not surprising given that 'philosophical commitments, to "truth", "rationality" and rationalization, "progress", with the belief that scientific analysis is the means by which the world will come to be known' (Fox, 1994: 7) coincide with modernity and modernist social theory. Haraway calls these claims to truth, through so-called scientific objectivity, 'the god-trick'. Moreover, notions of the 'truth' are intricately connected to the logocentric claim that 'scientific method makes reality accessible, without the intervention of any mediating process that might distort our perception' (Fox, 1994: 8). This, according to Fox, constitutes a claim to presence, which is taken to be an indicator of authenticity, of experience of reality, of being able to speak 'the truth' about something or other. I agree with Fox and other poststructuralist scholars who argue against modernists' claims that a single overarching truth exists. Foucault (1980: 133), indeed, suggests that it is 'not a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power (which would be a chimera, for truth is already power) but of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time'.

In my work, I attempt to engage in methodologies that will explore the social world in ways that do not seek to uncover an unmediated truth of particular subjects or objects. Instead, I focus my examinations on how truth claims about the social world are substantiated and mediated in, and through, particular cultural discourses (i.e., through institutional texts, individual narratives, etc.), but I also wish to pay critical attention to investigating how these discourses impact on 'actual activities and actual people' (Smith, 2005). I endeavor to move beyond the 'burden of the story-truth' (Trinh, 1989), remaining aware of the partiality of knowledge production. If, as Merleau-Ponty (1964: 96) writes, 'Truth is another name for sedimentation', and if the search for 'truth' is a project of positivism, which is the science of modernity (Foucault, 1980), poststructuralists would resist, not surprisingly, these

modernist propensities towards absolute truth. Merleau-Ponty (1964: xxv) critiques Western philosophical thought and culture and the historically privileged position through which it has '[i]nvented an idea of truth which requires the examination of all other cultures in an effort to incorporate them as aspects of a total truth'. Writing within a postcolonial framework that critiques this same desire for absolute and complete truth, Trinh (1989: 94) suggests that the search for absolute presence in language, one that is supposed to guarantee authenticity and an undisputed origin, is characteristic of Western logocentric thought. She states that her own writing has been influenced by this obsession for completeness:

Everything must hold together. In my craving for a logic of being, I cannot help but loathe the threats of interruptions, disseminations, and suspensions. To begin, to develop to a climax, then, to end. To fill, to join, to unify. The order and the links create an illusion of continuity, which I highly prize for fear of nonsense and emptiness. Thus, a clear origin will give me a connection back through time, and I shall, by all means, search for that genuine layer of myself to which I can always cling. To abolish it in such a perspective is to remove the basis, the prop, the overture, or the finale – giving thereby free rein to indeterminacy: the result, forefeared, is either an anarchic succession of climaxes or a de(inex)pressive, uninterrupted monotony – and to enter into the limitless process of interactions and changes that nothing will stop, not even death.

The kind of critique that Trinh engages in here, the critique of unity and clear origins, of innate universals, of the precise operational rules of language, and the ascent of universal concepts and categories, pervades and informs postmodern and postcolonial analyses of canonic language, representation, and discourse. While I am informed by these frameworks, nevertheless I want to say something about the social world that (re)presents, in a quite substantial manner, some of the 'truth' about what happens there, particularly as much of my work, like many feminist and poststructuralist researchers, involves working with people and groups who have suffered social injustices (Smith, 2005; Weis and Fine, 2004). However, many of the methodological and analytical tools that are available to feminists and poststructuralists (participant observation, triangulation, discourse analysis, interviews, self-reflexivity, photography, video, content analysis) are embedded in a positivist empirical framework that has an 'obsession for completeness' (Trinh, 1989). Thus, given the theoretical positions available to poststructuralists, it remains a struggle to find methods we can deploy in order to bring the 'goings-on' of a particular everyday world to light. Methodologically, I have found myself trying to work within a postmodern ethnographic framework.² The particular ethnographic methodology that I deployed in my study of locker rooms takes, as its central theme, the rejection of the possibility of a single true understanding of the

world; it focused on the 'inscription of ethnographic fictions' (Clifford and Marcus, 1986: 6), and on making a familiar world strange and collecting multiple 'truths' that operate in the social world (Denzin, 1997).³

One aspect of a postmodern ethnographic methodology is the movement toward using multiple methods in order to collect the multiple truths that operate in everyday life (Ristock and Pennell, 1996). This approach has been called triangulation (Lather, 1991; Ristock and Pennell, 1996), and it is done to establish data trustworthiness. Triangulation includes multiple data sources, methods, and theoretical schema to view a subject from different angles, but it also requires caution (Janesick, 2000). Johnson (cited in Lather, 1991: 168, n. 10) states that many theorists, Derrida included, caution against those who, 'having understood the necessity for a deconstruction of metaphysical binarity, might be tempted to view the number "three" as a guarantee of liberation from the blindness of logocentrism'. As such, triangulation of methods should not be seen as a 'catch-all', a kind of three-pronged approach to collect all the (hidden) data that will get us closer to the truth, but as a way of asking some different questions about a topic and making some accurate comments about the everyday world. Here, I use the word 'accurate' not in the positivistic sense as it is often used – that is, 'correct in all details' – but more in the sense of sixteenth-century uses of the Latin word *accuratus*, which translates as 'done with care' (*New Oxford Dictionary of English*, 1998).

Richardson (2000: 13–14) states that postmodern methodologies should not focus on triangulation because it always already operates under the assumption that a fixed point or object exists that can be triangulated. She suggests *crystallizing* as an alternative. Crystallization 'deconstructs the traditional idea of validity' and 'provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial understanding of the topic . . . Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know. Ingeniously, we know there is always more to know.' Crystallization of methods might impart a more deep, complex, and thoroughly partial understanding of the social world.

My engagement with postmodern and/or poststructuralist theoretical approaches presupposes that other ways (modern and positivist) are problematic. Why do I feel that it is so much better to take up the methodological frameworks I am proposing? In the first instance, I would offer that postmodern methods can account for multiple subjectivities in ways that modernist empirical methods cannot. Additionally, I believe that the atrocities that have been committed in light of modernist truth-seeking methods should not be revisited (see Lather, 1991; Trinh, 1989; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). Indeed, Lather (2007: 17) suggests:

Any illusion of presence unmasked is interrupted by the difficult task Nietzsche invites us to: not to unmask and demystify but, rather, to multiply perspectives toward an affirmation of life as a means to knowledge without guarantee (Kofman, 1993). This is a rigor of staging

and watching oneself subvert and revalue the naked truth in order to live without absolute knowledge, within indeterminacy.

Once we have our theoretical and methodological frameworks in place, and with all good intentions, we, as feminist and poststructuralist researchers, are ready to enter into the social world to uncover our partial truths about that world. Dutifully, then, with our tools of crystallization and indeterminacy in hand – tape recorders, cameras, self-reflection and observation notebooks, discourse analyses – we are ready to move into the everyday world and are determined to treat our participants and our research sites with respect. We know that we will care for the subjects and objects of our research better than any of the positivistic researchers we know. And surely everyone else knows this too, don't they?

Reading/capturing the body in space

Dilemma 2: Body space is flesh/Body space is text

Is it possible to actively strive to produce an architecture of excess, in which the 'more' is not cast off but made central, in which expenditure is sought out, in which instability, fluidity, the return of space to the bodies whose morphologies it upholds and conforms, in which the monstrous and the extrafunctional, consumption as much as production, act as powerful forces?

(Grosz, 2001: 162)

Feminist or poststructuralist social scientists are not exempt from the ethics screening that takes place at most, if not all, academic institutions. We are all required to adhere to certain kinds of ethical procedures and protocols, which are, for the most part in Canada (where I live), governed by university ethics review offices (EROs).⁴ The EROs at most institutions are charged with managing the university's relationships with research sponsors and promoting accountability in all aspects of university research activities. While EROs assist researchers in complying with ethical guidelines, their hyper-vigilance demonstrates institutional investments in the way the research is conducted, how one presents oneself as a researcher, and the kind of knowledge that is to be produced from research projects. This has serious implications for the kinds of research projects that faculty and students undertake.

Feminist poststructuralist researchers readily acknowledge that 'power plays', those 'subjectivities, external demands, and social relations that must be negotiated throughout the process of the research' (Ristock and Pennell, 1996: 116), are embedded in the research process. There is an adherence to principles of reflexivity, location, responsibility, validity, and transparency (*ibid.*: 66).⁵ Yet, the journey through the ERO is as arduous as any positivist

empirical scientific process. This is especially the case if one's research focuses on the body. Research on 'the body' is a red flag to EROs, as I learned at my university. Moreover, research on the body in locker rooms, I discovered, is multiply stigmatized. I believed that my research on the body in locker rooms involved no more than 'minimal risk' (as defined by my university's Research Services Ethics Review Office) to the adult participants or to the institution where the research was based.⁶ But the ERO was gravely concerned about some of my methodological processes. My first ethics protocol was returned to me so that I might address the ethical reviewers' concerns. The reviewers' comments, which pertained to the legalities of university research, created several methodological and ethical dilemmas for me, to do particularly with issues of autonomy, confidentiality, data collection, and knowledge production about the body in space.

One of the first comments that I read when the ethics protocol was returned to me was the following:

My view is that there are real unmentioned risks to participants in this research that can be anticipated at this point. Among them is the possibility that those interviewed will reveal information about physical and/or sexual assaults involving themselves as witnesses, participants or targets. This is highly likely since Ms. Fusco will be probing for this information. She might need to report such incidences to the university police and Athletic Center officials – the researcher should check the university reporting requirements. Participants should be told clearly that this would happen if they reveal information of criminal activity in the locker room that they have witnessed or participated in. The tapes she is going to collect could be subject to subpoena by police in cases where reports of criminal activity are given; the investigator(s) can be subpoenaed in these cases as well. At the least, the possible legal risks to participants and informants need to be spelled out much more clearly than at present. Informed consent means that anticipated risks are clearly spelled out.

This reviewer's concern stemmed from a question that I had written in my interview schedule.⁷ In this particular question, I proposed to ask locker-room users/administrators/staff whether they had seen anything in the locker room that was out of place there or anything that had made them feel anxious about or disgusted in the locker room. The reviewer's comments demonstrate that the body (and its sexualization) is a 'legalized' object and a possible site of criminality; the body, then, is something to be protected and surveyed (by the ERO). What the researcher wants to know about the body and who she wants to know it from are rendered suspect. And she is depicted, in spite of her good intentions, as someone who might compromise the participants' well-being or the university's reputation. This, of course, can make one defensive because,

as in my case, the reviewers believed that I had ulterior motives, when in fact I did not. I was interested in the sensuality of the body in space, but such institutional responses criminalize the body and its sensualities. Furthermore, I felt that the demand for 'reporting' compromised the criteria for both anonymity and confidentiality that had already established the safe atmosphere that I sought to establish with participants.⁸ However, I also acknowledge that many participants may be embedded in interlocking oppressions that impact on their experiences of their bodies, their cultures, and their social situations (Weis and Fine, 2004), and that I have a social responsibility toward my participants, their social world, and my subsequent representations of them (Fine *et al.*, 2000). There are many spaces and sociocultural situations in which research participants may feel vulnerable, and, perhaps, they may need to inform researchers about a situation where they have confronted exclusions, social injustice, or bodily harm. I know that I also want to protect my research participants from the ERO's surveillance, but if I wanted my research project to get ethical approval, then I needed to make decisions that were not, necessarily, of my own choosing. In my case, I conceded to reviewers' concerns by writing a 'disclaimer' in all the information letters and consent forms that participants were given.⁹ However, when I met with participants, I made it clear to them that outside investigations were unlikely to happen, and reassured them that I would endeavor to protect their confidentiality as much as I could. While it was not unreasonable for the ERO to set such parameters, their policing precludes certain kinds of conversations, which may eclipse the complexities of bodies, pleasures, and spaces. And their investments in the research process may reproduce a culture of fear that, as a researcher, I am not interested in reproducing. When I reflected on the ERO's concerns, I was reminded of Trinh's (1989: 94) words: '[d]espite our desperate, eternal attempt to separate, contain, and mend, categories always leak'. Trinh's analysis helped me realize the strength of postmodern and poststructuralist methodologies, which allow theoretical complexities to be realized. However, postmodern theory often has an uneasy fit with the systems of people's lives and so the dilemma becomes: what alternative paths could I forge in order to examine the complexity of bodily practices and discourses in the locker room?

First, I decided that I would still interview participants about the sensuousness of the body in locker-room spaces. Postmodern approaches to interviewing need to pay attention to 'the constructive nature of the knowledge created through the interaction of the partners in the interview conversation' (Kvale, 1996: 11). Kvale continues: 'The qualitative research interview is a construction site for knowledge. An interview is literally an *inter view*, an inter-change of views between two persons conversing about themes of mutual interest' (*ibid.*: 14). However, even interviewing does not escape the postmodern researcher's dilemma. The purpose of the interview has often been to get at the 'truth' of someone's experience. This, of course, is a foundationalist epistemology that posits that the autonomous and rational individual is ultimately

the foundation of discerning universal truths (Ristock and Pennell, 1996). Taking a postmodern approach means resisting the tendency to view the participants' stories as unmediated explanations of social life. Scott's (1992) poststructuralist account of the concept of 'experience' suggests that a subject's agency creates, and is created by, the situations and statuses conferred on them. Positing that there is no separation between language and experience, Scott suggests that experience is a linguistic event. Thus, in the retelling of their 'experiences', participants are constituted through their experiences. Without the linguistic event of the interview, particular experiences would remain unarticulated and thus could not be experienced *per se*. When 'experience' is valorized as a true representation of reality and the individual is presumed to be the origin of knowledge, then ideological systems about the rationality, universality, and autonomy of the subject are reproduced rather than contested (*ibid.*). Positivist and logocentric science has often viewed individual accounts of experience as fixed and autonomous. These accounts are often treated as 'reliable sources of knowledge that come from access to the real by means of their experience' (*ibid.*: 28). Although we know theoretically that there is always more and other than what is spoken, it is crucial to remain cognizant of the fact that we are also 'working from the actualities of people's lives as the people themselves know them' (Smith, 2005: 125). So, I turned my attention toward what bodies *do*, how they *function*, what they *affect*, and what they *produce* (Grosz, 1994: 170). This helped me, methodologically, to choose ways of capturing the body's performativity (as flesh and as text) in my research. In my interviews with participants, I asked questions about their routines, their feelings and their reactions to things that they saw, felt, touched, and smelled in locker rooms. Through these questions I could get at the embodied subjectivities of locker rooms. I asked them about how the space enabled and/or constrained their bodies and about their adherence to, or disruption of, the rules and regulations of this semi-public/private space. Their stories communicate much about space, subjectivity, privilege, normativity, and power in relation to space and the body:

Charlie (white, gay, male user/locker-room staff): I touch the bench, the faucets. In general everything is very cold and sterile – there's nothing in there that you would want to touch. I may touch a friend that I work out with, but never another client – I would never step out of that private space into theirs.

While remaining respectful of participants' vulnerabilities, I could nevertheless point toward the possibilities of a sensuous geography (Rodway, 1994) of the locker room, one that the ERO could not possibly survey or criminalize. Framing questions in ways that were provocative allowed me to challenge institutional investments in the research processes and products, which are ever increasing in an era of neo-liberal and neo-conservative accountability:

Caroline: I want to ask you what catches your attention in the locker room.

Do you notice other bodies? What do you notice about them? Are there any people that you would notice more than others? Does looking at other bodies disgust you or give you pleasure?

Sandra (sport center user, white, queer): I enjoy being in a space where I can see so many women's bodies, naked bodies. I steal a glance, I am respectful . . . I'm not straight, I'm queer, that's why I am self-conscious about looking. I'm undercover. When I notice other women that I think are lesbians, well, we give each other a knowing glance. I've been checked out in the locker room, it's an up and down thing, it's in the eyes . . . I enjoy looking at beautiful bodies and I think a lot of women enjoy looking at other women's naked bodies. Nakedness in culture is sexual; you just can't turn that off and see it as a purely biological thing.

The product of the interview itself plunges us into another set of dilemmas about representation. We often read about researchers transcribing interviews and conducting detailed discourse analysis of the interview texts. Although my original intent was to transcribe the interview tapes verbatim, I decided that I would not do this. I am sure that I am not the only one who struggles with this decision because we worry about (mis)representing participants' realities or whether the possibilities for a more substantial account will be limited. But as a postmodern researcher, what does it mean to transcribe words into a fixed, stable text, one that contradicts our own postmodern understandings of language's continual deferral? Denzin (1997: 41–42) critiques the processes of transcription, stating, 'embalmed transcribed speech is alien talk', it is one-dimensional, 'a form of mimesis', and its 'naturalness is a masquerade'. Likewise, Kvale (1996: 165) writes that transcriptions are 'interpretative constructions that are useful tools for given purposes' but that they 'de-temporalize' and 'de-contextualize oral discourse'. He states (*ibid.*: 166) that maintaining the original voice recordings of the interviews and using those for analysis may be a step away from fetishizing the written transcript, and argues that the transcript replaces the original dynamism of the interview:

The lived face-to-face conversation becomes fixated into transcripts. A transcript is a transgression, a transformation of one mode – oral discourse – into another narrative mode – written discourse. To *transcribe* means to *transform*, to change from one form into another. Attempts at verbatim interview transcriptions produce hybrids, artificial constructs that are adequate to neither the lived oral conversation nor the formal style of written texts. Transcriptions are translations from one language into another; what is said in the hermeneutical tradition of translators also pertains to transcribers: *traduire traittori* – translators are traitors.

But is this move to prioritize the taped interview as authentic 'original' also problematic? Can the transformation from spoken to written be regarded not just as a process of fixing words but as a process of destabilizing? If neither voice nor the transcriptions are authentic originals, then should we be committed to representing either in their entirety? In my struggle over whether to transcribe, I took account of these theoretical and methodological debates. I decided that the important question was not to ask about the best or correct way to transcribe individual accounts but to ask: what is the most useful transcription for my research purposes? There are few standard rules for transcribing, thus a series of choices has to be made about how to manage the data that we collect. I chose to listen to the tapes, take notes on the context of the interview, and transcribe (i.e., handwritten or typed) sections that I thought illustrated how people were positioned in relation to institutionalized discourses. I listened to the tapes several times and, with each listening, became more familiar with the narratives of the participants. I believe that engaging in what I decided was a hybrid (re)production of narratives helped me remain, irony aside, more 'true' to a postmodern process. But I still remained aware of using the participants' narratives in ethically and methodologically sound ways.

Another alternative path through the dilemma of reading and capturing the body in space was to use my own narratives of the locker room to open up the fears, histories, memories, and desires that have discursively and materially produced this space for me. Britzman (2000: 27) has argued that mainstream ethnography's focus on the 'ethno' (the study of people) and not the 'graphy' (the politics of writing about those people) is inherently problematic.¹⁰ In order to say something substantial about the social world, most researchers do pay attention to the 'ethno' (i.e., cultural representations of locker rooms and people's experiences of that space).¹¹ Yet, we must also focus on the politics of writing. Situating myself in the research process was important as my prior 'experiences' of locker rooms and people's anecdotal stories, as well as my theoretical conceptions about such a space, informed the direction of my research, the kinds of questions I asked, and decisions about the data I wanted to collect. The politics of my writing was very much influenced by my social location. I constantly asked myself: what kind of person am I who was able to gain access to, and ask questions about, bodies and spaces? How did my multiple social locations of athletic, woman, white, middle class, lesbian, and able-bodied impact on my research, experience and 'ways of seeing' (Berger, 1973) in locker rooms? In my research process, I kept a journal where I wrote about my experiences of the locker room at various points in my life. These were often highly personal and revealing texts, and I included many of the excerpts in my final writing. These narratives told me much about my socio-cultural histories, my body, my spatial practices, and my desires in and about this space:

My first experience of being in a locker room was in my junior and senior high school, a Dominican convent in Ireland. We were told that it would be a good idea to shower after our physical education classes. Cleanliness is next to godliness, and all that stuff. This, of course, was traumatic because there might be a point when someone would see our bodies, but of course there was some relief provided by the double green curtains on the showers. Nevertheless, Dominican or Irish Catholic modesty often took precedence over showering and I, like many other of my classmates, developed all sorts of elusive strategies to fool our physical education teacher who would hold our towels and sometimes even look in to make sure we were getting wet! Of course she was never fooled. I realized this when I became a physical education teacher myself and recognized the very same strategies in my students. Showering was doubly stigmatized when you had your period. When I left high school I also left behind the idea of not showering after sports. As I moved into my adult life, I became paranoid about cleanliness and washing after any sports participation. This has not changed. I am a clean freak, so I am curious as to why I decided to embark on this project; one that would show up the less than clean body practices of others. But, then again, this space has been integral to another part of my life. It is a space where I have come out, gone back in, watched, observed, and desired.

(Self-narrative, March 15, 2002)

Self-reflexive texts that include narratives of self and auto-ethnographical accounts have been highly critiqued because reflections on 'experience' can fall into a modernist, humanist trap, which valorizes the self-reflective individual and their experiences (Denzin, 1997; Fox, 1994; Lather, 1991; Scott, 1992). The struggle for researchers, then, is to find a narrative voice that will move beyond an epistemology that favors lived experience. Our 'self-stories' should be catalysts for social action and they should be enmeshed in a self-critical reflexivity of the current historical moment (Denzin, 1997; Ellis and Bochner, 2000; Sparkes, 2000). Rather than favoring my lived experience of the locker room, my self-reflexive narratives allowed me to make public my personal observations, reflections, interpretations, doubts, and dilemmas, which enabled me to become both an object and subject of my own inquiry (Richardson, 1994; Weis and Fine, 2004). These narrative thoughts indicated the temporality and spatiality of experience and of writing. They became a way of looking back, an 'auto-ethnography' (Richardson, 2000: 11) of sorts, which enabled me to stay close to the contexts in which my writing and research were being produced.¹² Moreover, I believed these self-narratives evoked a 'carnal intersubjectivity', a consciousness of the world by means of the body and flesh (Merleau-Ponty, 1964), or what Richardson (1992) has called an 'embodied positionality', between participants' stories and mine, that worked against the ERO's constraints.

Theoretically and methodologically, I knew that using any method to read the body and space could reduce the body in space to an object, fragmenting and fetishizing it, as the ERO had done. How could I examine the phenomenology of space? My political commitment to postmodernism and poststructuralism pushed me toward seeing the body as wholly constituted by discourse. But analyzing the body in this way means that it disappears as a material or biological phenomenon (Schilling, 2003). So how could I examine the phenomenology of the body? How could I 'capture' the body and space in ways that moved me beyond the 'body as text' and toward the 'body as flesh'? While feminist researchers might acknowledge the fluidity, the excessiveness of corporeality, and the messy materiality of bodies, how might we read and represent the textuality *and* textures of bodies in space? Bodies, and the fluids that seep, ooze, and excrete from them, should be accounted for. But can we capture this methodologically? I decided to use photography to get closer to representing the body and space in a way that did not reduce the body to mere discursive production. I took many photographs, and recorded many hours of video, in the locker room. This recording took place when the university's sports center locker rooms were closed to public use. Photographing spaces, and the texts and architecture of those spaces, can only ever represent our research sites in two-dimensional frames. This often deprives the reader of experiencing bodies, buildings, and texts in a multiplicity of ways. Analyzing any images out of their everyday context can make bodies and spaces more abstract. Taking photographs, and any subsequent analysis of those images, may also, ironically, demonstrate a commitment to a modernist project that privileges visual representation (Cosgrove and Daniels, 1994; Jay, 1993; Sontag, 1977). Caught in a postmodern dilemma of knowing the partiality and fragmentary nature of texts and bodies, I still believe that using photography can open up the (geo)graphic nature of our research sites. I felt that photography and video helped me capture a perspective that was different from interviews. Although I was not able to photograph bodies, I was able to photograph the texts of the locker room and the sensuous bodily traces that were left there – hair, spit, excrement, nail-clippings, etc. These corporeal rem(a)inders are beyond the 'scopic regime' (Jay, 1993) of the ERO. I also turned the camera on myself – I had a colleague videotape my locker-room routine (i.e., changing into and out of sports clothes, going to the bathroom and showering). While I have not used this self-narrative piece to date, the experience of turning my researcher's gaze inward re-sensitized me to the corporeal and sensuous realities of the locker room.

While photography can open up the visual in ways that might record the social spaces in which we work, we have also to remember that 'photography is an *uncertain art*' (Barthes, 1981: 18) and that '[p]erception . . . is never pure' (Denzin, 1997: 34). Additionally, paying attention to the biological body or 'naturalistic body' (Schilling, 2003) can be reductionist, essentialist, and ignores the particularities of bodies. Taking these cautions into account,

nevertheless, I believe that photographing the locker room and the corporeal excretions left there allowed me to get a better sense of the phenomenology of the body in a way that moved my work beyond the discursive production of the body in space.

When we are doing any research, whether it is about the body and space or any other aspect of social life, we try to be aware of our own privileged positions as readers, analyzers, and producers of data. We also take the time to consider how we should embark on choosing a set of methods that can best represent the work that we are doing (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). I was particularly interested in the body and discourses that produced and were produced by spatial practices, representations of space, and representational space.¹³ I wanted to find a set of methods that might trace the material practices and discourses of the body and how it was embedded in power relations, and that might let the body *be* in its complexity. As a postmodern researcher, I had to think creatively about my methods because empirical research and postmodern theorizing do not 'naturally' interlock. I chose many (modernist) empirical methods – I talked to people about the body and about the space of the locker room. I investigated locker-room texts as 'institutional coordinators' (Smith, 2005) of space, I paid attention to the kinds of visual representations that were present (and absent) in locker rooms, and I photographed bodily remainders in locker-room space. But I focused on what Britzman (2000) suggests are the concerns of poststructuralist theories: structures, practices and bodies, and why certain practices are made intelligible and valorized while others are constructed as unimaginable. Of course, these foci did not release me from the series of dilemmas that I have discussed above: namely, the problem of reading and/or capturing structures and practices in ways that represent the complexities of people's lives. In my case, then, I continually had to ask myself: can this set of methods allow me to think of the body and space in a way that is not theoretically or empirically reductionist? And how did these methods, at once multi-sighted and multi-sited (self-reflexive narratives about my own 'experiences', observations of the locker rooms, text analyses of documents and policies, semi-structured interviews and photography), help me think about and represent bodies in the locker room differently? Moreover, how could these multiple and hybrid pieces of data be analyzed? What dilemmas would confront me in analysis? How could I examine the cultural and ideological codes that are inherent in textual representations, be critically aware of their logocentricity and indeterminacy, *and* produce accurate representations of how things actually work? I engaged in both modernist-normative and postmodern-deconstructive readings of texts. A normative reading consists of reading texts according to their dominant realist narratives – texts are read as objective and non-political representations of reality. My normative reading views data as simply describing certain facts, processes, and services in policy documents, rules and regulations and architectural briefs. Postmodern-deconstructive readings

'radically subvert the realist agenda because the real world is no longer the referent for analysis or experience' (Denzin, 1997: 246). Norris (1987: 10) suggests:

To deconstruct a piece of writing is therefore to operate a kind of strategic reversal, seizing on precisely those unregarded details (casual metaphors, footnotes, incidental turns of argument) which are always, and necessarily, passed over by interpreters of a more orthodox persuasion. For it is here, in the margins of the text – the margins, that is, as defined by a powerful normative consensus – that deconstruction discovers those same unsettling forces at work.

My postmodern reading paid attention to how oppositions and absences structured bodies and texts in locker-room spaces. For example, I interpreted the absent-presence of discourses of the degenerate, disrespectful, improper body as the very condition for the respectable, clean, healthy body of the locker room. Any analysis requires that we also pay attention to the problems of interpretation (Denzin, 1997; Denzin and Lincoln 2000; Geertz, 1983; Hernadi, 1989; Lather, 1991; Trinh, 1989). To review the wide range of issues that has preoccupied Western hermeneutics about interpretation from ancient Greeks to the present is beyond the scope of this chapter. But the problem of interpretation appears to be centered on the concept of *meaning*. Trinh (1989: 149) suggests that stories should exceed notions of making sense. They should become larger than what she labels their own 'in/significance': 'The story is beautiful, because . . . it unwinds like a thread. A long thread, for there is no end in sight. Or the end she reaches leads actually to another end, another opening.' She suggests that asking whether certain stories make sense, whether they are true, 'is to cause confusion by an incorrect question.' As such, a reorientation is required. Rather than asking *what the discourses or material practices of the body and space mean*, I focused on asking, as Deleuze and Guattari (1983) might suggest, *how the discourses and material practices of the body and space work*. This can move our work away from any goal of unveiling the 'truth' about the body, subjectivity, and space and toward an analysis of the productive and performative force of the body and discourses (see Austin, 1962; Butler, 1990, 1997; Petrey, 1990). Methodologically, the shift from *meaning* to *doing* may help us move away from the accusations that are often leveled against poststructuralists' interpretations: that of radical relativism (Duncan and Duncan, 1988; Fish, 1980). Can a focus on *how discourses work* move beyond the political nihilism of poststructuralism? Here it is useful to cite Handleman (1989: 156), who states: 'Derrida in his interview with Kearney expresses frustration: "I totally refuse the label of nihilism . . . Deconstruction is not an enclosure in nothingness, but an openness towards the other"'.¹⁴ While meaning is interpreted as unstable and plural in postmodern theorizing, Derrida's words demonstrate that a continued political commitment to

uncovering the objectification and subjectification of the subject requires a reorientation of empirical methods in order to seek alternative paths to examine the everyday world, which will be open to *différance*, deferral, paradoxes, and complexities.

The possibility of messy texts

Dilemma 3: 'Readerly' texts/'Writerly' texts

In order to think these unthinkable thoughts and glimpse these unimaginable images, it is necessary to think and imagine differently. Analysis must constantly oscillate to and fro in an endless series of detours and displacements.

(Taylor, 1987: xxx)

The politics of ethnography as a Western, positivistic social scientific study of the social has been thoroughly deconstructed (Britzman, 2000; Denzin, 1997; Trinh, 1989). Denzin suggests that postmodern ethnographic research differs from positivistic social science ethnography because it now engages with experimental research that troubles the traditional notions of truth and verification.¹⁵ Cole (1991: 39) states that 'experimental ethnography can open up for the researcher the difficulties of cultural representation, the "literariness" of ethnography, and narrative constructions of authority'. More recently, Richardson (2000) has advocated an engagement with *Creative Analytical Practice Ethnography* (CAP Ethnography). In this type of ethnography, the writing process, the writing product, and the method of knowing cannot be separated. Casting the research in this form means that 'there is no such thing as "getting it right", only "getting it" differently contoured and nuanced' (*ibid.*: 10). Using CAP Ethnography means acknowledging the limits of our already partial perspective(s).

Postmodern ethnographies are asked to push their textual productions beyond what has been called a 'readerly' text (Silverman, 1983). Texts that strive toward an accomplished unity have been called 'readerly' texts. Silverman (*ibid.*: 243) writes: 'The readerly or classic text strives above all for homogeneity'; it 'organizes its materials according to the principle of non-contradiction' and 'rigorously limits the number of oppositions'. Readerly texts are defined by an 'imperative of inevitability', one that depends upon 'linear reading or viewing' and where 'any deviation from that norm threatens its existence' (*ibid.*: 245). The readerly text also purports to be a transcript of reality: it predicts, defines, and situates the subject. It is a type of writing in which there is no ambiguity (Ramchand, 1982).

Modern texts – political texts, professional codes, systems of thought and biographical or autobiographical accounts – I would suggest, are more often than not defined by the 'imperative of inevitability' and the logics of

logocentrism.¹⁶ Fox (1994: 10) suggests that 'any textual construction which seeks to persuade or denote knowledge, "the truth", reality or authentic experience or feelings' is a logocentric text. Here, I understand logocentrism to mean the privileging of the subject's authority, an authority that is grounded in access to knowledge and 'reality' through notions of certainty and truth. These, as well as the *logos* (the 'word'), are central to readerly texts. It is a disbelief in the logocentric basis of human reality that has opened up a focus for postmodern social theory, which 'rejects the possibility – epitomized by modernist obsessions with representation – of a transparent mediation of knowledge of the world by the human observer' (*ibid.*: 8–9).

Taking up a postmodern ethnographic methodology means moving one's work beyond the confines of the readerly text and toward the production of 'writerly texts' (Silverman, 1983) or 'messy texts' (Denzin, 1997). Heterogeneity, contradiction, anarchy, and incoherence characterize writerly texts. These texts promote an infinite play of signification; they are segmented and fractured texts; and they deny the possibility of closure. Silverman (1983: 248) writes: '[t]hese digressions and interpolations open up a new field of meaning – one which was there all along, but whose existence was hidden behind the linear organization of the text'. If incoherence confuses the reader, Poirier (1971: 74) suggests that this is not necessarily problematic. For Poirier, any literary study should show how 'words can sicken and befoul, heal and uplift us, and how precarious and momentary each such induced state can be'. Writing should not be made 'accountable to the liberal humanitarian values that most readers want to find there' or be 'a source of comfort and order but rather, of often dislocating, disturbing impulses' (*ibid.*: xv).

Denzin's (1997) 'messy texts' require that the researcher: (i) is aware of their own narrative apparatuses; (ii) understands that any writing 'frames reality'; (iii) knows that the writer is part of the writing project; and (iv) is committed to cultural criticism. Messy texts 'move back and forth between description, interpretation and voice' (*ibid.*: 225). This means that one's own methodological processes need to include one's own voice, institutional textual narratives, and the stories of those we research. Messy texts are open-ended, they refuse theoretical closure and they are useful for reflexively mapping multiple discourses that occur in a given social space.¹⁷

Traditional positivist and scientific methods leave little room for messiness, incoherence, or *getting lost* (Lather, 2007). Empirical realists' claims that reality, independent from us, can be known and described, buttress against anti-foundationalists, who strive to write texts that tell multiple truths about the construction of knowledge (Smith and Deemer, 2000). Theoretically and methodologically, many of us would like to be able to write writerly or messy texts, but I am not convinced that I can produce such a text. I am still not sure what it should look or sound like. Indeed, I am not sure that I have been exposed to many 'messy texts' in all the humanities and social science reading that I have done. I would surmise that our examining committees and peer

reviewers may not appreciate receiving messy texts. In my discipline, in particular, which straddles the biomedical, cognitive, health and social sciences, I shudder at the thought of trying to guide readers through writerly or messy texts. Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 151) argue that the process of literary production, the one that we often engage in when we propose, write, and defend research, is embedded within a system that is founded upon 'arborescent models of thought' as opposed to 'rhizomatic lines of flight'.¹⁸ This means, more often than not, that systematic research work produces relatively systematic texts. So, although we might find ourselves theoretically and conceptually committed to writerly or messy texts, we end up feeling constrained by our institutions and by disciplinary thinking, despite a desire to do otherwise.

The production of a readerly text is ironic and is a dilemma for anyone who claims to be a postmodern and/or poststructuralist scholar. Indeed, the poststructuralist critic has been accused of 'introducing his [*sic*] own interpretative strategy when reading someone else's text, but tacitly relying on communal norms when undertaking to communicate methods and the results of his [*sic*] interpretations to his [*sic*] own readers' (Abrams cited in Collini, 1992: 8). The university academic system, peer-reviewed publications, and graduate theses and dissertations more often than not demand, I should say expect, readerly texts, which constrains the possibilities for writing postmodern messy texts. I have found that remaining self-reflexive about how I reproduce or contest certain research, analyses, and writing practices, and any claims to knowledge that I might make, has been key to acknowledging my ongoing dilemma about my adherence or failure to practice what I preach. Lather (1991: 85) argues that when one is engaged in research, one is simultaneously caught up in one's 'own inescapable complicity in practices of cultural production'. Likewise, Hutcheon (1989) suggests that postmodern interrogation is 'a complicitous critique'. When I reread these authors, or others who make similar claims, it becomes more clear to me what postmodernist theorists mean when they suggest that we do not stand apart from the knowledge that we produce, and that we are implicated in the particular paradigm of knowledge that we critique (Pronger, 2002). But, if we produce readerly texts that make 'productive use(s) of the literary machine' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983: 106) and advance the cause of social justice, while foregrounding the lives of those who are marginalized, is it necessarily problematic if these texts are not fully postmodern or writerly texts? Again the question: what can research do? Many thinkers have helped me think about how we can represent our research findings (Gallagher, 2007; Lather, 1991, 2007; Smith, 2005; Weis and Fine, 2004). For me, the tension remains between my theoretical commitments to postmodernism and poststructuralism *and* saying something 'true' and 'accurate' about people's actual lives and the spaces they inhabit. But we may not always have to write messy texts to make a difference. Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 160) suggest:

You have to keep enough of the organism for it to reform each dawn; and you have to keep small supplies of significance and subjectification, if only to turn them against their own systems when the circumstances demand it, when things, persons, even situations, force you to; and you have to keep small rations of subjectivity in sufficient quantity to enable you to respond to the dominant reality. Mimic the strata. You don't reach the BwO, and its plane of consistency, by wildly destratifying.¹⁹

When we come to terms with the fact that our texts may reproduce the 'readerly' expectations of our disciplines, it is still important that we remain committed to the fact that *complete* expression is, more or less, unattainable (Merleau-Ponty, 1964). If this is so, how then do we make our incomplete, postmodern readerly texts valid? Lather's (1991: 63) construct, face, and catalytic validity are often cited as ways to 'check the credibility of data and minimize the distorting effect of personal bias'.²⁰ In my work, I attempted to adhere to Lather's notions of *face* validity (i.e., following up with participants in order to clarify their statements and asking them further questions that were generated from the first analysis of the interview data); *catalytic* validity (i.e., attempting to disrupt commonsense understandings of knowledge production with respect to my research sites and endeavoring to reorientate and re-cognize understandings of the sociocultural world); and *construct* validity (i.e., acknowledging my social location and paying attention to critical self-reflexivity). More recently, I am persuaded by Lather's (2007: 119, 77) encouragement to engage in transgressive validity that seeks to 'reframe validity as multiple, partial, endlessly deferred' and to 'challenge the lie about the possibilities of the naked truth'. I also pay attention to what Massumi (1992) suggests should be the kinds of questions we ask about our work with respect to its qualitative referents. What new thoughts does our work make it possible to think? What new emotions does our work make it possible to feel? What new sensations and perceptions does it open in others?

Conclusion

Dismantling the organism has never meant killing yourself, but rather opening the body to connections that presuppose an entire assemblage, circuits, conjunctions, levels and thresholds, passages and distributions of intensity, and territorializations and deterritorializations measured with the craft of a surveyor.

(Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 160)

I am not yet convinced that we know how our leaky, excessive bodies can become a/the site for challenging the ongoing writing projects of modernity and our 'own drives to orderliness and systematicity' (Grosz, 2001: 156). Shildrick (1997: 180, 12) argues that we require 'an awareness of the irreducible but fluid bodily investments which ground our provisional being in

the world and our interactions with others' and that attention to this 'leakiness may be the very ground for a postmodern feminist ethic'. Embracing the chaos and uncanniness of our corporeality – our bodies, breasts, with their symbolic flows of milk and blood, (pubic) hair, body fluids, excrement, semen, and (menstrual) blood – may destabilize the sterility of our writing (Bloomer, 2000; Longhurst, 2001). This may get us closer to engaging with Lather's (2007: 129) 'voluptuous validity', which is an embodied, disruptive, leaky, and risky practice. I am sure, however, that what I am calling multi-sighted and multi-sited methods and research practices, which hail from postmodern and poststructuralist processes, can move me toward thinking through the body (Gallop, 1988) in more complex ways. And further, that writing up many of the multiple actualities of the everyday world can express the body's materiality through texts and textures, which theoretically and methodologically may better ensure a 'fleshed out' sense of lived body space. If we acknowledge that we are both the producers and products of discourses and texts, then we will rarely fail to recognize that who we are, what we can be, what we can study, and how we can write about what we study are both enabled and constrained by the disciplinary technologies of the scholarly system of research production. As an empirical researcher, I also believe that I am accountable to my participants and I know that I want to do something that matters with my research. But I am compelled intellectually by postmodern and poststructuralist theoretical paradigms, which impact on my methodological choices, and I am therefore somehow left feeling guilty from my attempts to critique and translate spaces, contexts, and people's histories within these frameworks. Feeling guilty about our complicity helps only if it heightens our methodological sensitivities in ways that move our work toward disruptive, partial, and multiple alternatives. And if this work continues to push us in new directions, as we struggle with dilemmas of seeing, methods of knowing, and forms of representation of research on space and bodies, then it is worth the pursuit.

Notes

- 1 I would like to thank Kathleen Gallagher for her comments and suggestions on this chapter and for her generous editorial guidance.
- 2 I am not suggesting that there is one postmodern theory, but a multiplicity of postmodern theories. Further, there often appears to be no single or clear conception of the political implications of postmodernism. This lack of application is often criticized in my field of the sociology of sport because it can lead to a politics of disunity (Ingham and Donnelly, 1997). However, I would suggest that the postmodern political praxis should point toward 'what needs undoing first' (Hutcheon, 1989: 23). Certainly, a postmodern text should not 'aim at tying all strands of life and history into one knot' but rather it should aim to locate 'the concrete embodiment of overlapping networks of power' (Phelan, 1994: xvi).
- 3 I use 'postmodern' here rather than 'poststructuralism' to move away from being

embedded in questions of semantics. I talk about a postmodern ethnography because I want to challenge the strategies by which modernist meta-narratives and knowledge claims are made known. Additionally, I feel that 'postmodernism' is a better methodological term for me because I explore concrete, material, ethereal, and aesthetic practices of bodies and spaces as much as discursive ones.

- 4 'The University's memorandum of understanding with the Tri-Councils (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada) codifies, clarifies and harmonizes the roles and responsibilities of the Tri-Councils and of recipient institutions in the management of federal grants and awards.' Available at: http://www.research.utoronto.ca/ethics/e_conduct.html (accessed September 4, 2007).
- 5 Ristock and Pennell (1996: 115–116) define these terms as follows: Location is the position of the researcher, identified in terms not only of who they are, but why they are doing the research, and what their subjectivities bring to the work. *Responsibility* is holding oneself morally accountable for one's actions in the research process. *Transparency* is the process of making the researcher visible in the research process. *Reflexivity* is awareness of how the researcher comes to observe and effect actions and discourse; how the researcher attributes meanings and intentions; what understanding the researcher is creating; and how the research is creating them. Finally, *validity* is the integrity, accountability, and value of a research project, achieved through accountability both to the participants and to those who will be affected by the outcome.
- 6 'Minimal risk means that the probability of possible harms implied by participation in the research can reasonably be expected to be no greater than those that would be encountered by the subject in those aspects of everyday life that relate to the research' (http://www.library.utoronto.ca/rir/ethics_criteer1.html, 2000).
- 7 Most institutions require that interview questions be submitted with one's ethical protocol submission. These questions are expected to be the exact questions that will be asked of participants.
- 8 I wrote the following on my information letters and consent forms:

During the gathering of data, the information you provide will be kept secure from theft, interception and unauthorized reading and copying. All original data that you provide (e.g., tape recordings) and the transcriptions and notes made from those recordings will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at the researcher's home and to which only the researcher has access. To maintain confidentiality your name and any identifying information about you will be removed from the tape recordings and transcriptions and pseudonyms or codes will be assigned. You are assured that only the above researcher will listen to the tape recordings and read and analyze the transcriptions.

- 9 The consent form read:

You should be aware that if you tell me that you were involved in, or witnessed, any activity that constitutes a violation of the Criminal Code of Canada that there is a small possibility, that if that incident subsequently becomes the

subject of a criminal investigation, any tape recording of the interview *and the researcher could* be subpoenaed.'

- 10 I would like to thank Kathleen Gallagher for bringing Britzman's argument to my attention.
- 11 'Ethno' comes from the Greek *ethnos*, meaning 'nation'. 'Graph' and the suffix 'grapher' are derived from the Greek *graphos*, meaning 'writing', 'drawing', and 'writer'.
- 12 Richardson (2000: 11) states:

In telling the story, the writer calls upon such fiction-writing techniques as dramatic recall, strong imagery, fleshed-out characters, unusual phrasings, puns, subtexts, allusions, the flashback, the flashforward, tone shifts, synecdoche, dialogue, and interior monologue. Through these techniques, the writer constructs a sequence of events, a 'plot', holding back on interpretation, asking the reader to emotionally 'relive' the events of the writer.

- 13 Lefebvre (1991) suggests that spatial practices are the material expression of social relations in space: for example, a locker room is a spatial practice. Representations of space are conceptual abstractions that inform configurations of spatial practices: for example, architectural drawings. Finally, representational space is space appropriated by the imagination: for example, locker-room scenes in gay male pornography.
- 14 Richard Kearney. (1984). Jacques Derrida. In *Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers: The Phenomenological Heritage*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp. 123, 125.
- 15 Denzin (1997) details how new postmodern and experimental ethnographies have also been thoroughly critiqued by realist-positivists and interpretive critics who believe the old ways of research are better than the new writing forms.
- 16 This, of course, does not pertain to all literary texts, because for some, such as poetry, ambiguity is, or should be, central (Burke, 1967; Poirier, 1971).
- 17 Social space here can be understood in a Lefebvrian sense as 'logico-epistemological space, the space of social practice, the space occupied by sensory phenomena, including products of the imagination such as projects and projections, symbols and utopias' (Lefebvre, 1991: 11–12).
- 18 Deleuze and Guattari (1987) use plant models to explain the production of knowledge. They critique the Western, phallogocentric, aborescent (tree-like) model of knowledge, which is hierarchical and centralized. They offer a rhizomatic model as an alternative. Here, knowledge is not confined or constrained but spreads out, sometimes wildly out of control.
- 19 Deleuze and Guattari (1987) have proposed quite a different view of the body from modernist conceptions of corporeality and materiality. The body, as conceived by them, is a Body without Organs (BwO). This body is not an anatomical body but a non-organic political surface that is inscribed by power and desire (Fox, 1994), a site of infinite flows and intensities. Massumi (1992: 71) writes, 'Think of the body without organs as the body outside any determinate state, poised for any action in its repertory; this is the body from the point of view of its potential, or virtuality.'

- 20 (i) *Construct validity*, which is 'determining that constructs are actually occurring rather than mere inventions of the researcher's perspective requires a self-critical attitude toward how one's own preoccupations affect the research'; (ii) *face validity*, which 'is operationalized by recycling description, emerging analysis and conclusions back through at least a sub sample of respondents' – the purpose is to ensure that one's work makes sense to others; and (iii) *catalytic validity* 'represents the degree to which the research process re-orientes, focuses and energizes participants toward knowing reality in order to transform it'. This means providing new understandings by disrupting current ways of thinking (Lather, 1991: 67–68).

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Exploring historicity and temporality in social science methodology

A case for methodological and analytical justice

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In Toronto circa 1910, a handful of anonymous Canadian photographers did produce a body of work which is astounding in its optic perception of the time in which they lived . . . Working conditions, health, housing, education, sanitation, children, motherhood, all came under their close scrutiny. Often told where and when to go for the pictures, what to include, the very discipline of what they had to reveal provided them with an ‘art of seeing’ with which they produced many images of poignant intensity. Many of the photographs show what needed to be corrected or what was being corrected in the lives of immigrants and workers of 1910.

(Lambeth, 1967: 1)

The key to a critique of historical knowledge, which was painfully missing in Kantianism, is to be found in the fundamental phenomenon of inter-connection, by which the life of others can be discerned and identified in its manifestations.

(Ricoeur, 1981: 3)

Introduction

In the autumn of 1999, I began work on an ethnography designed to explore larger sociological questions about youth economic disadvantage and new urban subcultures. The initial focus of the work centered upon the lives of homeless and economically disadvantaged girls and young women as they were represented – both as ‘bodies’ and ‘subjects’ – in media images and other public source documents (see Dillabough and van der Meulen, 2007). As the ethnography developed, I began to see the value of these words and images representing working-class girls and young women as elicitation devices for facilitating dialogue. Particularly, I saw how they might be used in exchanges with the project’s female youth participants about life in the modern Canadian



Plate 10.1 Front Street, Toronto, 1917²

Source: City of Toronto Archives, Series 372, Sub-series 32, Item 315

city and urban school; in other words, I came to recognize that such visual sources could be used in ways that went beyond their utility as primary data sources for the larger ethnography (Dillabough and Kennelly, forthcoming). As I thought more about these images, and their distinctive characteristics as either historical or contemporary sources, I began to feel as though any ethnography which posed questions only about the present (and primarily as 'discourses' or 'linguistic understandings' about girls and young women operating in the present) threatened to degrade the 'art of seeing' (if one sees ethnography, as I do, as art) through which the lives of these young women might be understood differently. To borrow the words of the late Paul Ricoeur (1981), 'historical knowledge' seemed to be 'painfully missing' from existing ethnographies about young women, and indeed, from the sociology of youth more generally. What was missing in this case was a methodological engagement with the role of *historical knowledge* in the making of contemporary representations of young working-class women, particularly as inspired by photographic and media images and associated written accounts (see Felman, 2000). Youth subcultural theorists had entertained the importance of history (however loosely) in partially framing the nature of youth subcultural formations (see Cohen, 1997; Nayak, 2003), as had feminist historians. But sociologists of young people seemed largely oblivious to history, concentrating instead on the present as an isolated temporal period (see also Dillabough, forthcoming).

As a partial response to this recognition, I began preliminary archival research in each urban site where contemporary ethnographic data pertaining to young women was to be collected.³ As I did so, I came across many striking visual and documentary sources from the public record representing young girls and women across the course of the twentieth century. But what was I to do with this material? I had not been trained as a historian, nor did I have much experience in historical method. And what of periodization? I had little intellectual inclination toward the provision of a history of childhood or working-class female youth, nor could I offer sequential chronologies of injustice directed toward girls and women through representation or oral histories. Surely, the feminist historians had done this already. Instead, I began to formulate the following methodological challenge: how, through methodological intervention, should I confront the past as I undertook a sociology of working-class girls and women in the present? How could I draw upon these images in legitimate ways, despite not being trained as a 'mainstream historian'? How might I find ways to use the image as both a historical and a contemporary resource in the service of a cultural method that would illuminate the lives and contemporary social circumstances of working-class girls? And how might any new approach contribute to the broadening of methodological debates about contemporary feminism, social class, and the female subject? Here were the dilemmas and challenges toward which my unexpected discoveries in the archive and in the public record had led. If the

documents and images upon which I gazed had a clear substantive dimension, opening previously unexplored connections between the lives of young women in the present and the lives of young women from the past, they also spoke directly to larger methodological concerns, to the need to find new ways of working toward a localized expression of that ‘temporalized sociology’ about which Patrick Baert (1992: 1) has so thoughtfully written.

The archival and contemporary images and accounts which I encountered constitute the central intellectual impetus for reading more deeply into what Clifford Geertz (2000) refers to as the ‘darkness’ plaguing much contemporary methodology and social science research about political categories such as gender and, to a lesser degree, feminist methodology. This darkness that Geertz evokes concerns the dissociation of much social science methodology from larger theoretical questions which circulate in social theory debates about the power of interdisciplinarity in the study of the female subject, particularly through method. To be more direct, the darkness refers to the ways in which some of our research practices in the social sciences and associated feminist methodologies may sometimes leave us prey to the constraints of our disciplines, and to the many conventions associated with our fields of study. While we must be generous toward our methodological past, as Lather (2007: 1) writes,

If feminist work is not to become routinized and predictable, it must interrogate the enabling limits of its own practices. This is a sort of ‘faithful transgression’ that is not so much self-correction as negotiation with complexity where feminist practice is ‘always already rewriting itself’. . . . The goal is a generative undoing of a certain orthodoxy that is a necessary part of feminism making itself coherent and authoritative. Displacing fixed critical spaces enacted in earlier practices to which we are indebted, we move toward an ‘iterative productivity’ . . . that is open to permanent dynamism.

In this chapter, then, I endeavor to find a little light and engage in a very partial ‘generative undoing’ by turning for guidance to two great social theorists of the twentieth century – Hannah Arendt and Paul Ricoeur – and their twin concerns with ethics and with temporality. In doing so, my purpose is to widen methodological discussion in relation to the social role of representations, particularly as they impinge upon the categories of ‘gender’ and ‘identity’ (Bloom, 1998; Britzman, 1998). I focus primarily upon the need to ‘think without bannisters’ (Arendt, 1971; Ricoeur, 1981) about the utilization of particular methods and analytic approaches for examining economically disadvantaged young women in the public record and, therefore, in time.⁴

The central questions I address are derived primarily from reflection upon two particular categories of visual sources which, though discrete – according to the contextualizing imperatives of classical historicism – remain intimately

and persistently linked across space and time, serving as powerful narrative sources. On the one hand, I encountered evocative photographic images, such as that reproduced above (see Plate 10.1), portraying Canada's economically disadvantaged urban young women and children from nearly a century ago. On the other, I had been challenged in the temporal present by more familiar media images and accounts of female youth homelessness in contemporary Canada, as exemplified by the case of Jazzie, a 'homeless teen' featured in the *Toronto Star* in February 2003 (see Plate 10.2).

In examining both images simultaneously, questions emerged for me regarding how one 'reads' – in methodological terms – historical and contemporary representations from the vantage point of what Paul Ricoeur has spoken of as 'historical time' (see Ricoeur, 1981) – the crystallization of distanced pasts reconfigured and appropriated in the present; or that which both Clifford Geertz and Hannah Arendt have identified as some of the conflicting narrative myths of history which are often legitimized as 'truth cults' operating in and through the very images themselves. Both images were, of course, artfully designed to impact upon a public audience in their own time, and could never be seen in terms of straightforward reproduction. Nevertheless, I was particularly struck by the deeply familiar resonances of the first source, by the ways in which images of urban poverty nearly a hundred years ago have the continuing power to connect with the present, whether in the form of 'trauma



Plate 10.2 Jazzie, a 'homeless teen'

Source: Peter Power/*Toronto Star*

narratives' or as the partial sedimentation of enduring ideas about working-class girls.

I draw upon these reflections as a starting point for assessing methodological and theoretical trends and associated approaches for assessing female representation in the public record. In so doing, I argue that the myths to which Arendt refers often persist over time through methodological practices and through public representations themselves, as part of an inherited *collective* and/or sedimented research memory.⁵ One way this may be seen to operate is through the act of historical repetition (of which the researcher studying only the temporal present may be unaware), through aspects of research practice which relate to the seemingly 'endless [*re-representation*] of catastrophes' (see Felman, 2000; italics and brackets, my addition) about the lives and experiences of working-class girls (see also McRobbie, 1982, 2004, 2005, 2008). Consequently, those of us undertaking methodological approaches designed for engaging the temporal present, or involved with the analysis of representations, may sometimes fail to address larger questions about the ways in which – particularly in terms of both paradigmatic dominance and ethics – the past lives represented in images of this kind may be seen to connect with the present lives of today's urban Canadians. Such connections often operate through deeply sedimented, normative concepts of female selfhood and official accounts of citizenship, which can be seen in operation across the generations. The implication of this is that the scope of ethics in methodology should not be seen as tied only to 'reflexivity', apparently 'equal' research relationships, 'open-ended insider approaches', feminist critique, dialogue and the like, but also to our understandings of fundamental historicity – to ethnographic research as addressed, conducted, and expressed within the terms of temporality in broadly philosophical terms. The underlying principle here is that research relationships ought not to be framed as operating only in the temporal present as 'face-to-face' confrontations between the researcher and the researched (or as contemporary confrontations between the researcher and discourse/social text). Nor should they be seen to stand as the sole objects of our methodological attention, nor offer a focus of our desires to redress a past which we have yet to confront or learn about, nor satisfy a simple ambition to be generous to other, 'less fortunate others'. Research relationships are also fundamentally temporal to the degree that we can learn from a past which has remained elusive to us, and which points to our methodological connection with it (Simon, 2005). This requires a temporal awareness and a methodological specificity which arguably still remains at the margins of much critical and 'reflexive' research on gender, education, and representation.⁶

Guided by these observations, I hope to advocate a more ethically aware account of methodological thinking, holding out opportunities for the emergence of more complex narratives about girls and women in relation to economic disadvantage, both through the practice of analytical innovation

and through representation itself. The methodological thinking I seek to identify is designed to represent a conceptual breadth which accounts, as far as may be possible, for wider debates in social theory about the female subject and associated narrations. Such narratives, in drawing upon larger developments in the history of ideas about the 'poor' female subject, would support a radical interrogation of how the social order of the past continues to shape prevailing ideas about economically disadvantaged female youth in the present, along with methodological conventions as to how such a subject might be engaged. Arendt (1968a: 150) writes: 'to identify an action is to tell the story of its initiation, of its unfolding, of its immersion in a web of relations constituted through the actions and narratives of others. Likewise, the wholeness of the self is constituted through the story of a life – a coherent narrative of which we are always the protagonist but not always the author or producer' (see also Caverero, 2000).

As Arendt and Ricoeur both suggest, our responsibility as researchers is to recognize that we need to understand better that isolated representational narratives in the public record may fail to offer us the 'radical historiographical' (see Felman, 2000) account of young women which we need to seek out. Nor can they, on their own, offer us an account of 'who' economically disadvantaged young women are through traditional forms of feminist 'reflexivity' such as 'insider politics' or sometimes illusory forms of solidarity (see Arendt, 1971: 151): 'when the one that speaks also acts, she shows her words are not empty' (see also Bilsky, 2000). Nor, in my view, can young women be characterized through representations simply as forms of narrowly defined *linguistic* discourse of an ungrounded, immaterial kind from which we are dissociated. Arguably, such approaches (i.e., discourse analysis, particular forms of 'deconstruction') have held sway 'as fixed critical space[s]' (Lather, 2007) in the study of gender and identity over the last two decades, particularly within sociology and feminist educational research. Through sustained consideration of images which juxtapose past and present as visual expressions of narrow and constrained perceptions of justice, I wish to argue that the combined interdisciplinary positions of theorists such as Arendt and Ricoeur may guide us toward important if often elusive aspects of representations with the capacity to escape many of the conventional limitations of a straightforward 'discourse' analysis of representations of working-class female youth *identity*. And these theoretical interventions, in turn, hold out the possibility of significant methodological rethinking in social science research.

The remainder of the chapter is organized into three parts. The section which follows elaborates the central problematic of the chapter – namely, the part played by enduring historical representations of the 'poor female subject' in shaping public narratives about, and methodological orientations toward, economically disadvantaged young women in the present. It also considers existing critiques of this problematic from the perspective of the fields of gender studies, debates in social theory, and feminist history. The

second section serves as a critical analysis of some of the dominant methodological trends in representational analysis (most particularly, 'discourse analysis') of the category of 'gender' in the public record. The final part of the chapter outlines a preliminary way forward – both methodologically and theoretically – in thinking through the relationship between the expansion of analytical justice and representations of female youth economic disadvantage across time.

Narrowing our public consciousness in research: 'image, text and talk'⁷ about young women as methodology and the public record

Let us look more closely at the archival photographic images of female economic disadvantage in urban Canada at the turn of the twentieth century with which I began. Throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth, divergent representations of economically disadvantaged youth and children in Canada's urban centers were directed toward a growing and increasingly interested public audience. The power of such representations drew in part from the increasing sophistication of relatively new technologies, such as the camera and the tools of the print media, through which novel images of youth economic disadvantage could be opened to the public gaze. These were not innocent or unvarnished representations. Often endorsed by the police or public health officials, many of these images resonated strongly with public policies, driven by the twin reforming concerns of education and health, and by legal discourses⁸ designed, in part, to ease public anxiety and moral controversy about slum-life, immigration, and precocious sexual behavior,⁹ particularly among young girls (Alexander, 1995; Comacchio, 1993).

Much of the poignancy, as well as the power, of representations such as Plate 10.3 – which shows a Canadian urban slum and its young female dwellers in 1914 – derives from their capacity to betray contemporary narratives of social conflict within a rapidly changing industrial landscape, narratives which were, of course, deeply implicated in the production and configuration of the images themselves. As Barbara Harrison tells us, such representations are a powerful 'trigger to "telling"' precisely because they persist through time as 'an important site for the embodiment of memory, as traces for working through a place for the self in the past and present' (Harrison, 2002: 108–109; Rousmaniere, 2001). Images like these vividly evoked middle-class philanthropic concerns in turn-of-the century Canada about a particular kind of dangerous and unpredictable 'self', and about youth in its emergence as an increasingly identifiable and visible fraction of the urban 'dangerous classes' (see Sangster, 2002). Lurid colonial perceptions of youth were also widespread and, as such, were open to appropriation from new media practices and, ultimately, from the state itself. In the original textual accounts which



Plate 10.3 William Street, Toronto, 1914¹⁰

Source: City of Toronto Archives, Series 372, Sub-series 32, Item 326

characteristically accompanied such images, the living conditions and associated problems of girls and young women inhabiting urban ‘slums’ were extensively portrayed in crude pathological language – ‘dirty’, ‘slum-like’, ‘sexually promiscuous’, ‘helpless’, ‘criminal’ (Humphries, 1981: 11–12). The remedy for this perception of urban crisis was seen to lie, above all else, not in a widening perception of justice or with sympathetic and sophisticated social analysis, but with the application of moral ‘correctness’ and the promise of ‘protection’ in conformity with the colonial ideal of the middle-class ‘good mother’, substantially inherited from the nineteenth-century ideology of separate spheres of state life.¹¹

In light of the symbolic history underlying representations of gender in the public record, what might we identify as the central concerns circulating about representations of working-class women and girls in the public record? And what light might these concerns shed upon our research practices as a partial response to Lather’s call for a ‘critical undoing’ of feminist research? Feminist historians and sociologists alike have critiqued representations of women in the public record on a number of grounds, some of which document a concern about the ways in which researchers have addressed the methodological challenge of re-representing such young women (see McRobbie, 1982, 2004), or of critiquing the public record on the grounds of misrepresentation.

First, and perhaps most importantly, such critiques insist that the representation of working-class women and girls in public sources and in some ethnographic accounts (including those derived from the visual image) has remained closely bound up either with the romanticization of the working-class girl (see Bloom, 1998; Lesko, 2001; McRobbie, 1982, 2008; Pillow, 2004; Walkerdine and Lucey, 1989), and/or with the need for its subsequent 'deconstruction' in the present (see Britzman, 1998; Lather and Smithies, 1997; Lather, 2007; Sangster, 2002). As a consequence of such an approach, young women are often presented as unable to 'speak', of initiating a 'form of telling' in any meaningful sense, for themselves, about their own social conditions. And perhaps most importantly, nor are they in any way seen as connected to similar others from an identified past. Rather, they are characteristically wrenched from the meaningful contexts in which their stories were told to the researcher or journalist in ways which leave the re-representation without a narrative dimension in place and in time.

Whether one is, for example, a feminist researcher, a journalist or a photographer, intentions of one kind or another always inform the methodological articulation of girlhood. This often stems from a perceived need to separate the young woman from the state as authors of their lives (e.g., voice research), or as weakened individuals who are seen as victims of an unforgiving state. In such cases, the methodological approach serves to protect the apparently sovereign voice of the autonomous girl as she speaks of her injustice through 'her own voice' as a coherent person with legitimacy in her own right. However, in such contexts, gender identity may emerge as an ontological site of either sovereignty, or totalizing domination through particular methodological practices. It would seem in this case that the retrieval of the 'lost girl' is what is at stake and that a re-represented 'voice', or that which we come to respect as legitimate through solidarity, becomes our goal.

Consequently, our methodological aims to rescue such young women through what Bilsky (2000) refers to as a 'politics of love' (e.g., open-ended dialogue, 'herstory', 'girl stories', or re-representation in a positive light), whether methodological, representational or otherwise, may sometimes emerge as a conventional discourse of closure rather than an ethical or temporalized representation, in which a story about girlhood emerges unfolding in the face of time through the medium of others. In this way, as McRobbie (1992) suggests, the analysis of social texts about girls may serve particular theoretical and political functions at one moment and act as another form of boundary maintenance in the next. But in the morality play, the idea of redeeming young women as a hidden methodological function is sometimes conflated with a masked 'trauma narrative' (see Felman, 2000) from the past, or with a particular species of liberal repetitions concerned with sovereignty yet inscribed in the public record as a narrow and deeply deterministic understanding of what it might mean to be 'working class', 'poor', and female.

By contrast, within the frame of – for example – much liberal second-wave

feminist methodology, young women may also reappear in a new, elite, and apparently more progressive liberal form. Shaped in this way, girlhood as a whole, regardless of class, ethnic, or cultural position, may be seen to be defined by the researcher through either conformist or aspirational notions of idealized girlhood. These aspirational conceptions sometimes carry the potential to impose upon such young women a way of becoming 'female' which not only necessitates an unlikely intra-class shift but implies that a particular middle-class modality of girlhood constitutes the legitimate form of female citizenship. In this case, young women must emerge with a new and improved form of identification which aspires to a progressive girlhood which can be saved from the state itself, but at the expense of the loss of memory of their class history or their deep connection to others from different times. The paradox this raises for economically disadvantaged young women is evident, particularly as it also impinges upon the historically charged gaze of the researcher, journalist, and other expressions of public consciousness. Young women are enjoined to strive to achieve a new class status, yet they are simultaneously, if often inadvertently, demonized for being female within an already subordinated and apparently 'dangerous' class. In other words, the practice of methodology may itself here serve as a symbolic act of redemption or as a class or race conflict (what Bourdieu (1984) has named a 'classification struggle') without any commitment to an ethical temporality that could potentially provide for a localized cultural account of girlhood, a natality that could be achieved only through engagement with rich and interconnected temporalized understandings.

Second, we should note that, both within research and the world of representations, the relationship between 'delinquency', gender, and social class in urban cities continues to be represented differently for young women by comparison with young men. As feminist researchers are well aware, the study of gender and social class has receded across the last two decades with the ascendancy of methods associated with the 'linguistic turn' (to be discussed in more detail later in the chapter). But at the same time, Fraser and Gordon (1995) and Sangster (2002) suggest, a particular conflation of gender, deviance, and working-class stratification has continued to impact upon public perceptions of female economic disadvantage, and has actually heightened in the early twenty-first century, along with concomitant methodological and analytical strategies. One outcome is that within the context of research, degrees of delinquency are often presumed, whether in the form of the state failing its 'dangerous' girls or researchers attempting to retrieve an understanding of delinquency in the form of 'first-hand' narrative accounts offered by girls themselves (see Lather and Smithies, 1997). As part of a methodological project, such accounts may sometimes seek to provide a 'counter-narrative' or 'subversive repetition' (see Butler 1990; Lather, 2007) against negative constructions of girlhood, and in this respect clearly serve as important attempts at achieving recontextualization, decentering, and narrative complexity. However, as McRobbie (2005) suggests, researchers may re-represent

the counter-narrative or forms of researcher reflections in ways that may be unrecognizable to the girls themselves, or else the counter-narratives may be subjected to a kind of theoretical formalism, paradigmatic dominance, and regulation which operates within a particular class/cultural context, and historical landscape.

Third, representations of female economic disadvantage have been more consistently and more profoundly moralizing in tone and substance when they have related to young women who are associated with economic disadvantage, live on the streets in urban cities, or are homeless. This can be true in both the practices of methodology, often expressed in the characteristic form of a benevolent feminist sensibility, as well as in the representation itself. While it is clear that the category of 'woman' or 'girl' has long functioned as a platform for moralizing sexuality and appropriate gender behavior within representational norms, such a function has been extended with particular force in recent years to the category of working-class girl. Such problems are also strikingly demonstrated in much contemporary sociological and educational research on particular young women who have been identified by the researcher in the form of the 'eternal victim', a logic that particularly inheres in the historical category of the 'poor young girl'. The researcher in this context may be likely to conceive methodology as a committed attempt to place the researcher in the same critical place as the researched, and to effect this strategic goal through the introduction of concepts such as trust, empowerment, and the redistribution of power dynamics. But how do trust and ethical reflexivity operate in the frame of photographic images; and how do the young women researched (now frozen in the archive) convey a narrative complexity that does not undervalue their historical experience? As both Caverero (2000) and Arendt (1968b) remind us, both trust and researcher sentimentality always carry a dangerous quality. To place trust in a person in relation to the story one seeks to tell (as a trigger) is to assume falsely that the researcher has a political sensibility which gives pride of place to the ordering of the young woman into a politically legitimate research subject. It also presumes, yet more damagingly, that the research outcome is a product of a parity of conditions within the research practice.

Associated dilemmas here emerge most forcefully when we have to decide where our central concern lies – with the researcher, the young women, or both. An important consequence of this difficulty is that we are again likely to learn relatively little about the young women themselves who are featured in these images, past and present, through the forms of their representation as part of the research agenda.¹² Pressure to move beyond accounting for what Hannah Arendt would call 'mere appearances' in research or through methodology may also be so great that a meaningful, temporalized study of young women remains difficult to achieve. This is because the understandings we derive from such images and associated methods and rates of 'output' may themselves constitute a form of social reproduction, relaying static and deeply inequitable

representations of gender within the public record. As Bilsky (2000) suggests, representations and associated analyses not only have the power to shape the nature of public consciousness on a broad scale but hold the power to change the way we think of ourselves in relation to them. If a 'politics of love' or trust resides at the center of the methodological practice, we may be even less inclined to engage in the kind of historiographical dialogue or questioning which results from witnessing our connection to past events linked to youth economic disadvantage in the present. What is likely to emerge from such practices? Should we seek a dispersal of meaning with past time or is such a thing possible through methodological interventions? Or are our methodological strivings more meaningful when we focus on capturing meaning as an effect of temporality and historical connectedness rather than relying, as our principal focus, on the retrieval of the female self or its deconstruction as represented in an image or linguistic account in the public record?

Having recognized this range of conceptual and practical problems and questions both for representational analysis and methodology, we might ask where this leaves us in relation to the development of more expansive expressions of justice for young women. In the absence of a 'radical historiographical' (see Felman, 2000) account of female disadvantage, any surviving personal account by the young women portrayed in these images, or of their responses as readers of the public record, we are ultimately left only with the residue of the partial historical representations which we see before us. This is by no means only a problem for our understanding of the past itself, for upon these flawed foundations, middle-class elites have built what Alexander (1995: 12) has described as 'compelling media images of disorderly and immoral young working girls, arousing public antipathy to social change and regenerating faith in Victorian notions of girlhood purity'. Consequently, young women were – and continue to be – 'robbed of a medium' through which to articulate their humanity as a legitimate social narrative in its own right (see Felman, 2000). At the same time, accounts of female youth economic disadvantage as ultimately grounded in demonized conceptions of the deviant and impure working-class female, or, by contrast, the new and reformed autonomous working-class girl, have attained contemporary currencies which Descombes (2000: 12) describes as 'common sense collective representations'.¹³ It has therefore become increasingly difficult to draw straightforwardly upon progressive methodological practices as a practical imperative for understanding the social order within which working-class young women are positioned as political subjects in the present and as necessarily connected to identifiable pasts. We must continue to grapple, therefore, with a range of methodological dilemmas as we seek to reveal the underlying assumptions generated about female economic disadvantage through research practice across time.¹⁴ In this respect, the methodological practices of interpretation must reflect upon the problems we encounter in the present when the historical language of representation has been shaped by isolated decontextualized

accounts – or what Felman (2000), echoing Arendt, has coined as the ‘banality of history’ about young women who live in poverty.

In undertaking this kind of reflection, I particularly follow the work of Arendt and Ricoeur (1967, 1998, 2000) in seeking to assess the manner in which methodological analyses of female youth poverty in the public record in the past and the present have been undertaken. While I do not offer detailed analysis of such representations here,¹⁵ my central argument is as follows:¹⁶ if we seek to understand methodological forms concerned with the female subject as driven by something more complex than a redemptive claim of gender ‘equality’ or liberal sovereignty, or as something more than a realist and often criminogenic reproduction of female youth poverty, then we need to understand these symbolic expressions of gender in the public record not only as discourse, linguistic signifiers, or fluid ungrounded text. We must also see them as partial yet still sedimented narrative elements of an inherited social order, within which the ontological status of female subjects is persistently constructed.¹⁷ If we understand this basic argument not as a rejection of the analysis of language or discourse per se but instead as a wider methodological dialogue which takes us past, but not beyond, what we are ‘up against’ in relation to, for example, ‘the limits of deconstruction’ (see Lather, 2007) in seeking to confront past, present, and future, then perhaps such a widening of methodological debate emerges as plausible and generative (as opposed to a form of theoretical opposition).

In the next section, I move forward to critique – in a generous sense – some of the dominant methodological and analytical trends in assessing representations of young women in the public record. In critiquing some of these trends, I seek to draw upon some of the tensions associated with language and temporality in outlining the beginnings of an interdisciplinary framework for examining how young women have been represented in public source documents across time. This alternative approach might be seen as establishing a dynamic interconnection between the field of cultural sociology, Arendt’s political philosophy, and Ricoeur’s ethical phenomenology.

Discourse readings of female youth poverty as methodology: a critical interrogation of paradigmatic dominance

Over the last twenty years, a key and arguably dominant methodological approach for studying representations of young women as ‘text, image or talk’ (see McRobbie, 1982) has been ‘discourse analysis’, primarily derived from the turn toward language and discourse in social theory debates about the female subject in continental Europe in the late 1980s (see Dillabough and van der Meulen, 2007; Dillabough, forthcoming). Within this wider theoretical context, there has been a comprehensive movement away from examining – through methodology – representational forms of female

economic disadvantage as temporalized elements of material culture or as the straightforward bearers of ideological subtexts, in the style of an Althusserian, materialist, or phenomenological analysis.¹⁸ More recent approaches have more commonly emphasized feminist Foucauldian and Derridian discourse analyses (see Derrida, 1994; Lather, 2007) of representations as linguistic signifiers or forms of governmentality (see Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002), which shape and reconstitute the conditions of power as they are associated with female youth poverty. Here, the subject of female youth economic disadvantage is typically understood as a hidden discourse of power which regulates, rather than determines, the public's perception of gender in a broad sense. This very significant and creative shift in theoretical perspective has allowed feminist methodologists to move beyond any notion of retrieving an objectifiable representation of young women as true identities or as equal subjects. It has permitted them instead to view the representational form as socially constructed through language forms which are characterized as discursive and binary in organization (see Derrida, 1994¹⁹). This approach stands as a partial break from an earlier structuralist moment emphasizing more uniformly state-directed forms of power.

While such an approach has undoubtedly assisted feminist methodologists in identifying how the language of gender regulates the social order through representational forms (as well as the effective and necessary challenge to structural functionalism), my own view is that the turn toward 'discourse' as the *primary and generalized symbolic locus of analysis* has led to particular methodological forms of paradigmatic dominance when thinking about feminist critiques of the category gender, particularly in relation to temporality. Consequently, many of the methods associated with a critique of language – including the 'limits of deconstruction' – could be seen as failing in part to expose the temporalized nature of material structures which play some part in reproducing representations of, and indeed discourses about, economically disadvantaged female youth in the public record over time. The cumulative effect of focusing *solely* upon the language of female representation is that it may undermine how we come to think about young women not only as category to be 'undone' or 'troubled' but as an unfolding narrative in time and space and a temporally contingent 'who' – rather than a 'what' – in the social life world (see Arendt, 1971; Caverero, 2000). In other words, we may fail to witness the temporal experience of such young women through whom language and discourse must necessarily speak. In the remainder of this section, I will offer some further points of intervention which might provide what Lather (2007) suggests as a 'generative undoing' of a sole reliance on discursive approaches as a way of critiquing representations of working-class girls.

First, one way toward some recasting of methodological approaches in relation to gender and identity might be to recognize what it might mean on practical grounds to omit a temporalized assessment of, and methodological dialogue with, both the ontological (inherited cultural notions of becoming

the female self) and material concerns in any representational analysis. Many would indeed argue that more recent discourse approaches to the study of female economic disadvantage have engaged in such omissions. And if we think carefully about it, such omissions can be seen as constituting an important absence, particularly in the face of the popular class obsessions in the public record of charting working-class girl traumas in the present (see McRobbie, 2004, 2008). Indeed, ongoing methodological desires either to deconstruct or to re-represent discourse about such girls as language (e.g., voice research, revealing the binary elements of the language itself) may diminish our capacity to account for the social reproduction of youth economic disadvantage over time, together with recirculated ideas about the sexually deviant body, which continue to be generated through temporalized representations. It may be more likely, then, that a representation, when simply exposed or critiqued through elements of discourse, may fail at least in part to provide a comprehensive 'critique of ideology in the form of a [temporalized] critical political semantics' (Fraser and Gordon, 1995: 35) in relation to female youth economic disadvantage in the present. Nor will it be likely to expose the aims of a corrosive contemporary neo-liberal ideology as it continues to erode the safeguards of young women who live in profoundly difficult economic circumstances. This problem comes more clearly into view when the urban street is viewed as a symbolic site of both regulation and social division, which shapes the conditions of mobility for economically disadvantaged girls across time, or represents the site where working-class female identifications are exposed to substantial and varying degrees of legal and political surveillance.²⁰ In other words, being on 'the street' and being female represent a particular bodily marker which demands investigation beyond the more generalized nature of language as these markers are contingent upon a temporal connection to the experiences of others from a recent past, but who we may not yet know; they cannot, in other words, stand alone as a category. These markers therefore always represent more than can be seen in the discourse or language of the contemporary account. Arguably, such markers carry residual surplus meaning from an earlier time and are therefore fundamentally grounded in material conditions not only in the present but from the inherited past.

While a discourse analysis of female youth 'poverty' can unearth a potent and illuminating historical genealogy of power formations which pertain to young women in the state (see, e.g., Lesko, 2001; Pillow, 2004), it may not always account for the part that the representation may play in the formation of both micro- and macro-social processes (such as novel policing practices, social policies on homelessness, and broader public perception) or its reappearance in methodological forms. These, ironically, may influence the very reproductive processes the representation or its associated methodology may, on the surface, be seeking to eradicate. For example, it may be the case that we could scrutinize a media representation, an educational policy or indeed a researcher's account of young teenage women who are living without

a home and thereby determine their linguistic power-knowledge functions. Such a methodological approach would be, and has been, a useful and important intervention. But we may still know little about how the representation operates to shape public consciousness, forms of 'positional suffering' and social harm directed toward such young women and their families (see Bourdieu, 1998). We would, to put these sociological abstractions somewhat differently, be limited in our ethical understandings of how the representation plays a part in, for example, class, race, and gender conflicts across time, larger questions of public accommodation, and the refusal of our ability to 'speak together' in concert over the problem of social inequality. We might also fail to see how the lives of such young women in the images under scrutiny demand – as narrative contextualization – a form of temporalization which takes them beyond the isolated moment of contemporary language use about working-class girls and toward the 'space of appearances' where a story of female youth advantage may appear.

An additional problem is that the temporal effects of an elite class assertion of gender, particularly as it relates to geographical dimensions of urban life (e.g., street or 'urban slums'), cannot easily be uncovered through a discursive analysis of public representations, and nor can it be easily revealed through traditional sociological methods (such as voice research). My contention is rather that while a focus upon gendered language may provide a conceptual apparatus for breaking down the essential nature of female identity generated through inherited knowledge forms, the very spatial configuration of discourse itself also asserts enduring class configurations and plays some part in the temporal formation of public understandings. Over-reliance upon discursive analyses which may not be able to address elements of temporality and space as principal methodological and analytical tools may therefore result in the loss of the experiential circumstances of living as a young female on the street with 'no fixed address' in times of retrenchment; of being judged solely on those terms; and of the practical discrimination which accompanies such judgements.

The inability of a discourse model to recognize the power of temporal forces in shaping representational forms as they relate to diverse young women living in poverty may also raise further significant sociological and philosophical questions to which response is difficult. For example, a methodological critique of language may not readily account for the larger questions of continuity and change which I have noted in the form and content of such representations, and in associated analyses of them. Nor can this kind of methodology fully address the notion that, through the operation of the processes of distancing – as derived from Gadamer and further developed by Ricoeur – cultural representations must function in part to connect the social structures and social/cultural spaces of the past and the present through specific interpretive configurations and modes of narrative transmission (Ricoeur, 1981: 75–88).²¹ This may lead toward the forfeiture of any methodological purchase upon the

tensions which exist between culture and structure in critiquing temporally located representations of female youth economic disadvantage. Rather than engaging in a deconstruction of discourses of 'female youth poverty', we may also need to pose questions about the role of the public record in shaping theories of the female self through this linking of past and present through forms of narrative transmission. This requirement highlights the scale of the methodological challenge which lies before us.

A final problem encountered through our methodological ties to discourse and associated critiques is their potential unsuitability for addressing questions of young women's agential capacity to act with others in the social world, their forms of identification, and/or their ontological status in the state. This means that accounts, for example, of female homelessness and poverty may ultimately denote nothing but an empty space which is simply occupied by 'narrowly defined linguistic discourses' (McNay, 2000) or that which Arendt (see also Felman, 2000) describes as 'liberal trauma narratives',²² without structural or temporal understandings. These cannot, as Arendt and Ricoeur would each insist, signify a mark of struggle or detour, contestation or change in the public meanings generated about working-class girls in different historical periods. Nor are discourse analyses easily able to indicate 'who' has been constructed as 'stateless' and hence denied the possibility of agency. Ultimately, then, any notion of the active construction of narrative selfhood is lost and the assumption that female youth are simply passive victims of a narrowly defined urban discourse of the street comes to dominate public consciousness. As Villa (1995: 190) writes of Arendt: the 'disclosure of the agent in speech and action implies . . . an abiding subject, a reality, behind appearances'. On this view, female youth need to be seen as both suffering and acting, if as necessarily constrained subjects, in a larger material, historical, and symbolic world. The quest for an expansion of analytical and methodological justice through the representation could therefore be undermined in all these respects, reinforcing the pressing need for some radical rethinking of prevailing methodological approaches, and for a turn toward the kind of interdisciplinary solutions particularly signaled in the work of Arendt and Ricoeur.

In light of some of the methodological shortcomings that I have noted, my central conceptual thrust seeks to combine sociological concerns about female youth economic disadvantage with larger philosophical concerns about the temporal significance of representations – through both methodology and representation itself (see Arendt, 1958). The following section serves as an exploratory way forward in expanding the ways in which to think broadly about methodological justice, primarily in relation to the ethical question of temporality and its role in framing methodology as a 'critical consciousness' about the event at stake in our research efforts.

Theoretical and methodological considerations: an interdisciplinary approach

In this section, I turn to charting the beginnings of a theory of public representations of female economic disadvantage which I hope may speak to larger questions of methodological and analytical justice. My starting point is to argue primarily for a critical methodological reading of representations that is grounded in what Felman, Ricoeur and Arendt have, in different ways, understood as a critical consciousness about the event or issue under scrutiny within the realm of the social sciences. For if, as Felman (2000) suggests, there is a 'reading' of social problems unaccompanied by historical knowledge and understanding, there is only a representation at the level of the object. Following Felman (2000), I therefore put the question as follows: what are the *truth cults* (Arendt, 1968a) and forms of 'staged silencing' which frame the manner in which we think about methodological justice? In posing this question, I attempt to move the discussion beyond an account of female youth poverty as monumental victimization or as progressive feminist retrieval. Rather, I seek to uncover the degree to which such representations and associated methodological approaches (e.g., discourse analysis) may be seen as processes at work in shaping the cultural field (see Bourdieu, 1998) of gender and social class as a *magnified hegemonic image* from the past, that is a repetitive category of understanding in public consciousness across time. This means that the methodological imperative of doing research differently in the face of the research problems that I have identified may lead us toward a necessary reconception or 'generative undoing' of the problem itself (Lather, 2007). My primary objective remains, therefore, to bring into view the ways in which an inherited and deeply symbolic gender order impinges upon the norms of methodological and analytical justice within and across time and space.²³ Representations of young women in the public record cannot be disconnected from 'the terms' – as active forces – that are used to describe social life across time. As Fraser and Gordon (1995: 34) write:

the terms that are used to describe social life are also active *forces* shaping it. Particular words and expressions often become focal in such struggles, functioning as keywords, sites at which the meaning of social experience is negotiated and contested. Keywords typically carry unspoken connotations that can powerfully influence the discourses they permeate – in part by constituting a body of doxa, or taken-for-granted commonsense belief that escapes critical scrutiny.

In short, the importance of this constellation of arguments in changing the focus of our analyses is that any representational analysis of young women must account to some degree for the temporal workings of the social order and, ultimately, for the cultural and material effects of its operation at the level

of cultural conflict, selfhood, and structure. This seems a particularly urgent task if we are to understand how social processes accrue over time to inform representations of young women. It is here that the methodology must go beyond a concern only for the generation of new tools and procedures, toward a much more fundamental engagement with issues of temporality and historicity, both in terms of substantive analysis and in terms of methodological reflexivity. In this light, I therefore now outline two related methodological approaches for addressing the expansion of analytical justice through the work of Hannah Arendt and Paul Ricoeur.

The contribution of Hannah Arendt's philosophy: an analytical-methodological intervention

In the previous section I raised many now well-established sociological concerns about the materiality of a representational form in the public record. I now wish to turn to larger philosophical questions about the female subject who is constructed as economically disadvantaged (e.g., Jazzie) through the media and other analytical forms, and then to establish links to larger methodological questions. For me, what this implies is the necessity for posing – within the context of our methodological planning – metaphysical questions about the ways in which the female subject has been represented as a temporal expression of that problem which Hannah Arendt identifies as the ‘metaphysics of the subject’. In other words, we need to assess critically the normative manner in which essential, coherent notions of the female subject are postured or redeemed through methodological and representational practices. Though she is not herself a representational theorist, Arendt’s work on the problematic of the apparently ‘rational citizen’, together with her theoretical reflections on problems of objective knowledge, selfhood, and history, come together to offer a particularly promising starting point from which to develop a theory of representational analysis that might take us beyond a straightforward discourse approach tied primarily to a critique of the language of female youth poverty.

One way to engage in an Arendtian critique is to move beyond sociological concerns and to suggest that representations must be read – as a methodological investment – for the ongoing circulation of ‘truth cults’ or forms of ‘mere appearance’ which are normalized not only through the contingent forms of language which are associated with the image but through a history of representation as a narrative form. Arendt’s contention is that: ‘truth can only exist when it is humanized by discourse’; or, as Ricoeur would put it, ‘the event consists in the fact that someone speaks, someone expresses himself or [herself] in taking up speech’ (Ricoeur, 1981: 78).²⁴ Truth, in an Arendtian framework, cannot exist in the objective sense since it is the ‘agent, not the anti-thesis, of manipulation’ (Disch, 1994: 289). Consequently, our first goal – as methodological practice – should be to denaturalize the normative stance or truth

posture of the representation and take it into the realm of a public discourse as a form of action which simultaneously connects to the past, present, and future. In doing so, it essentially engages 'historical time' through the notion of 'human time', constituting 'the time of our existence and our experience, but also a time that encompasses and overflows them' (Pellauer, 2007: 71). In this respect, a 'critical consciousness' of female economic disadvantage configured in terms of the human experience of past lives is a necessary precursor for seeking a more ethical stance on our understanding of disadvantage in the present. In short, both the representation and the methodological practice through which it is approached demand temporalization as a central form of reflexivity.

The central questions I pose – as exploratory methodological practices and principles – of the representation, then, are concerned with revealing how either the research practice or the representation itself reproduces what Felman (2000) identifies as an 'endless repetition of catastrophe . . . as [eternal victims] forever locked up in trauma'. Or, by contrast, they may emerge as someone who is ultimately represented as a potentially banal, paralyzing category who has been either 'deconstructed' or redeemed as an autonomous liberal actor only through the agency of the research. I also seek to pose larger questions about the degree to which signs of the 'conscience of humanity' (see Felman, 2000) stand at the core of any methodological intervention, and its 'normative architecture' (see *ibid.* and Bourdieu, 1998). I am, for example, interested in understanding how particular forms of gendered posturing (e.g., redemptive female subject, eternal victim) reproduce that which Arendt (1958) has identified as 'world alienation' generated through essentially static accounts of female youth marginalization which may be constrained in part by identity politics or singular notions of a conflicting collective. In addressing such concerns, we would need to direct more specific questions first toward any methodological effort and the representation itself beyond re-representation or gendered language, recognizing the 'limits of deconstruction' as the dominant method of critique. We need in fact to ask how both may reflect the historically moving yet simultaneously enduring social position of women in the state as relegated to the space of the private, or as victims in need of love, redemption, and ultimately deconstruction. We need to ask how they may frame public conceptions of the gendered, classed, and racialized political subject/citizen; and how they reflect larger issues concerning justice, economic inequality, and hierarchies of the social order which are manifested not only in isolated representations but in the practice of re-representation through research or disciplinary traditions.

In this way, links between sociological research on young women and class conflict, alongside deeply sedimented and inherited gendered structures, can join hands with a more philosophical Arendtian concern with the power of modernity to define working-class female selfhood in highly constrained terms. Weaving together this combination of conceptual ideas, it becomes easier to

see clearly the sometimes subtle and often unintentional forms of ‘symbolic violence’ (see Bourdieu, 1998) which have characterized particular research practices about the temporalization of female youth poverty in the public record. Zerilli’s (1995: 179–180) interpretation of Arendt is helpful here:

Arendt sees the violence in these borders. She also sees the need to transgress or attenuate them. Arendt contests the very meaning of the subject’s freedom and, by extension, the borders that he/she erects to secure it. ‘Man cannot be free if he does not know that he is subject to necessity’, she writes. Inasmuch as ‘his freedom is always won in his never wholly successful attempts to liberate himself from necessity (HC 121), it is always partial and, when bought out at the price of disavowal, both illusory and empty’.

Ultimately then, if we are to ‘transgress methodological borders’ (see Lather, 2007) it seems right to clarify the question of whether any approach toward the assessment of representation is no more than ‘mere appearance’ – where there is a failure, through the practice of method, to create a thinking, suffering, acting other – as against that which Arendt (1971) refers to as ‘meaningful appearance’. In the illustrative case I have used here – the problem of a methodology as language critique or historical repetition – if what is revealed in the representational analysis fails to offer some critical purchase upon the material markers of female youth economic disadvantage as a social narrative in process, then we are faced with an isolated assessment which has only the empty prospect of a static history before it. One cannot, in such a case, view the female self as unfolding or playing out in temporal relation to a particular social location marked by deeply entrenched forms of social conflict. As Kristeva (2001: 18) writes of the narrative self:

the art of narrative resides in the ability to condense an action into an exemplary moment, to extract it from the continuous flow of time, and reveal a who . . . For it to remain revelation, too, and not to be frozen by reification, it must be played out. Against static mimesis, Arendt calls upon theatrical gestural action as the *modus operandi* of optimal narration.

Paul Ricoeur’s ethics of temporal selfhood and the representation of the past

Truth, agency, selfhood, and history constitute shared theoretical grounds for Arendt and for her intellectual contemporary, Paul Ricoeur (she was born in 1906, he in 1913). In terms of political philosophy and forms of critique also, the two held many common assumptions and objectives, with Ricoeur often invoking the name of Arendt in his writings on ethics, justice, and political action. In asserting that politics constitutes ‘the architectonic of ethics’,

Ricoeur goes on to accentuate his position in *The Just* in a methodological language closer to that of Hannah Arendt: 'it is within the *interesse* that the wish for a good life finds fulfillment. The wish to live within just institutions signifies nothing else' (Ricoeur, 2000: xv–xvi). The symbolic locus of methodological interest here resides primarily in the term '*interesse*', which refers to the idea that, as human beings, we are concerned with, and connected to, an ethical temporality with others made present for the purposes of a public justice. Without this methodological complexity, young women from the past (even if they are not identified by the researcher as our immediate concern) are 'immediately forgotten "as if they had never existed", their deaths as superfluous as their lives had been' (Arendt, 1968a: 124). Arendt continues: 'Only the fearful imagination of those who have been aroused by [first-hand] reports but have not actually been smitten in their own flesh, of those who are consequently free from the bestial, desperate terror which . . . inexorably paralyzes everything that is not mere reaction, can afford to keep thinking about horrors [or about being a victim]' (*ibid.*). In other words, to ignore the power of the 'event' in relation to temporality (and against the horror) would be to withdraw from the world (see also Smith, 2006). If we are to direct our attention, within methodology, away from temporalized human experience and historical knowledge and toward an overemphasis upon discourse or voice accounts, then we may, in the present research climate, be engaging in a kind of methodological withdrawal. And in terms of ethics within methodology, 'such a withdrawal amounts to nothing less than the "impossibility of thought itself"' (*ibid.*: 1; see also Arendt, 1968a).

In engaging with representations of female youth poverty, Ricoeur's voluminous scholarship can be seen to help in relating methodological questions about the representation of female youth identity, particularly concerning narrative identity and time, and also with the widening of Arendtian concepts of methodological justice. The centrality of the storied, agential 'who', a figure who acts through the exercise of desire alongside others but simultaneously suffers through the operation of the involuntary – tragedy, old age, poverty, inevitable mortality – deeply marks Ricoeur's oeuvre and his concern with temporal justice through method. For Ricoeur, a paramount characteristic of a selfhood that is inescapably situated as well as reflexive is in its ethical striving toward that responsibility which is 'expressed by the verb *I can*'. The 'I can' of a deeply situated self narrated within the contexts of time and place 'can be read in terms of four verbs, which the "I can" modifies: *I can speak*, *I can do things*, *I can tell a story*, and *I can be imputed*, and action can be imputed to me [in part] as its author' (Ricoeur, 2002: 280; Ricoeur, 1992: 16). The space within which the capacities of this active and unfolding selfhood can be recognized and enacted is constituted by time, and it is the task – the duty – of the researcher, and others responsible for critiquing – as method – representations of young women, to represent them truly as a debt to those who have lived in the past, those who live now, and those who will form part

of the public in the future or the 'not yet' (see also Simon, 2005). This responsibility must be sustained over time through methodology even though images and analyses of once-living working-class girls may exist only in the frozen images of a photographic archive. This duty is best expressed in terms of the debt that the living, who always enter a world that they have not made, owe to the dead and to their capacity to have suffered and acted in the space of their own time. It is the record of this suffering and acting which generates the fund of surplus meaning through which we come to understand the past – and, thereby, the present. Surplus meaning can only be engaged through a hermeneutic methodology directed toward the reappropriation of meaning from the past and the recognition that images and texts give up their fullest meaning only as a consequence of distanciation. Unlike Gadamer, for whom temporal distance constitutes a permanent obstacle to any 'true' understanding, for Ricoeur distanciation constitutes its necessary condition, being 'the dynamic counterpart of our need, our interest, and our effort to overcome cultural estrangement' (Ricoeur, 1976: 43).

We are indebted to those who have gone before us for part of what we are. The duty of memory is not restricted to preserving the material trace of past events, but maintains the feeling of being obligated with respect to these others, of whom we shall later say, not that they are no more, but that they were.

(Ricoeur, 2004: 89)

Against the prominence of a discourse approach strictly bound to language, it is in this sense that we may wish to argue that in comparing the photographic images, past and present, with which I began, that truly 'The space of experience is the past made present' (Dauenhauer, 2000: 235). It also points to the significance of drawing upon theoretical conceptions of temporality, meaning, and social experience as they are debated within the social sciences to enhance our interdisciplinary methodological efforts. In so doing, we might hope that our methodological focus might move away from emphases on revealing or critiquing categories of identity and toward an assessment of the continuing presence of others' experience through contemporary analysis. This experience, the experience of the nameless lives of the dwellers of the urban slums of the early twentieth century and the voiceless accounts from Jazzie (see Plate 10.2), constitutes historical traces which, because of their capture and preservation in the archive, are able today to assert themselves as a continuing presence 'without which we would not be who we are'. Methods utilized to assess female youth poverty in the present therefore must seek to capture this 'space of experience' as the past made present. In this way, associated analyses must strive toward representing 'the weight of our past on our future. It obligates us, in historical responsibility, not only to take our past into account in what we do today but also to respect it for tomorrow in ways which a

critique of its language forms [solely as discourse] may in some manner undermine' (Dauenhauer, 2000: 242). But this obligation is not only a historical one or one which allows the past to stand as the only legitimate medium for characterizing economically disadvantaged young women. It is also manifestly ethical, challenging our commitment to work toward the development of just institutions and research practices that may have eluded the past. This is so because of the operation of time itself. Temporal distance, in rendering historical figures – now surely dead – as visible and persisting presences of an absent time, allows us to open ourselves to their legitimate expectation of justice in their own lifetimes, and thereby to the expectations of those who have followed them. Here Ricoeur contrasts the immediacy of face-to-face friendship – accomplishing 'the miracle of an exchange of roles between beings that cannot be substituted for each other' – with the temporal distance of unknown others (including young women whom we may have presumed to understand). Here is a distance which establishes the character of an expanded analytical justice in action – such as the example of temporal exposure of images for dialogue with which I began – as an elicitation device for connecting to a lost past: 'however wonderful the virtue of friendship may be, it is not capable of fulfilling the task of justice, nor even of engendering it. The virtue of justice is based on a relation of distance from the other, just as originary as the relation of proximity to the other person offered through his face and voice' (Ricoeur, 2000: xiii).

The power of near-century-old images, and of more contemporary media images, to achieve this feat is a consequence of the loss of their original historical context and reference, as well as the absence of direct narrative accounts from the young women themselves or those who may have been connected in some way to them. As with any document, photographs are fixed in the moment of their production, but with the subsequent passage of time their reference becomes widened and their surplus meaning released for readers of the future to appropriate. It is in this sense that 'the symbol', as Ricoeur has famously asserted, 'gives rise to thought' (Ricoeur, 1967: 352). It is through such symbolic understanding that our awareness of the past which has shaped us, and of our fate as finite figures in a discernible history, is made. Without this recognition of historical situatedness within the context of research, it is impossible to develop that critical awareness of 'historical responsibility' (see Simon, 2005) which is essential to the expansion of more just analytical and methodological forms. (As Arendt reminds us, it is not that we should attempt to transform the world but how we think about and reflect upon it that is required; see Giles, 2007.)

Such a historical responsibility would require us to accept that 'individuals are only the initial drafts of human persons' (Ricoeur, 2000: 10) which unfold in the lives of others in the future. This understanding of the person 'as an initial draft' can be developed broadly through our methodological interventions concerning the study of gender and identity. And because 'Personal

identity is [only] a partial temporal identity' (Ricoeur, 2004: 105), historical consciousness therefore must constitute an "ethical intention" within [methodological approaches and analytical forms] which . . . *aim at the "good life" with and for others, in just institutions*' (Ricoeur, 1992: 172; italics in original). This understanding would also require us to think more seriously as methodologists about Ricoeur's conception of 'the problematic of the representation of the past [and the present]' (Ricoeur, 2004: xvi). Clearly, this is less a specific pragmatic approach or instrumental reconceptualization and more a general stance toward the expansion of justice through methods which might seek to embrace past and present. Here, Ricoeur conceives of the formal historical record as an 'institutional sedimentation', as the 'archiving of a social practice' which not only demands a critical consciousness of it in the present but necessitates the taking of an analytical detour from late twentieth-century emphases upon selfhood, identity politics, and its associated language forms toward a critique of institutions and practices responsible for sustaining such forms of ontological sedimentation (*ibid.*: 220). 'Considered in this way', Ricoeur (*ibid.*) goes on,

the process of institutionalization brings to light two faces of the efficacy of representations: on the one hand, in terms of identification – the logical, classificatory function of representations; on the other, in terms of coercion, of constraint – the practical function of establishing conformity in behavior. On the path to representation the institution creates identities and constraints.

In contrast to the persistence of benevolent myths within methodologies about a personal relationship with the 'poor female subject', or a mechanical solidarity with the 'researched', or a deconstruction of the category 'gender', it is important to take some analytical and methodological distance here: Ricoeur, like Hegel, is aware that some historical understanding can come only with temporal distance from our own analytical authority and, in the case we have looked at here, from images of young women, as they are offered to us in static representations. Moving beyond, for example, a critique of the subject (however important now and in its own time) toward a vision of a once-present past as a form of social narration within methodological practice allows us to work toward such distancing. And the nature of any such efforts must always lead us back to the persistence of that past as a complex narrative which must unfold, despite its material absence in the static representation, always remaining available to the appropriate institutional/methodological apparatus through which we may interpret it in the current moment. In other words, such distancing moves us – as methodologists – beyond a critique of categories and the re-representation of the autonomous speaking subject who is responsible for their own destiny, toward a 'theater of appearances' about actors and sufferers who are always enclosed within moral interpretations and temporal

locations, but who must not be cut off from the meaningful presence of others – without whom they could not have appeared in any meaningful sense. What this alerts us to is the need to draw on historical sources in more creative and expansive ways, to engage them not only analytically but dialogically and dynamically. This implies that we need to find ways – to take the case of the sources at which we have been looking – of embedding images and meanings from the past more explicitly within ethnographies of the present, developing strategies which will allow both participants and researchers to respond directly to evocations of urban female poverty speaking from a different time and place, but also from a setting which is immediately familiar. Here, the goal might be to utilize the image systematically to open a space within the narrative for a sustained temporal and generational dimension of public understanding in which the research dialogue is expanded across time as well as across place. In this case, confronting our connection to others in past time through research practices emerges as one hermeneutic imperative for rethinking the present. It also requires an expansion of ethical repertoires in research – across all research actors – which can be enabled only through an interdisciplinary searching for that historical knowledge which continues to impact on our research practices in the present. This methodological intervention emerges as temporal reflexivity which calls upon us to ‘know something about the past made present’ (see Ricoeur, 2004). We might ask, for example, does our method (e.g., dialogue, critical media discussions, self-portraits, talk, image critiques) embrace a notion of the ‘once present’ as we conduct our contemporary ethnographic research with young women, and does this help us to envision a less ‘thoughtless’ future which frames social conflict on a much wider scale? Such work can be done only through an interdisciplinary bridging which takes as axiomatic that narrowly defined subjects inherited from particular traditions of thought and practice – for example, sociology, educational research methods, youth studies, and even feminist methodology – are unlikely to expand the ethical dimensions of research without methodological detours into an ethical temporality in order to widen their research remit as well as their intellectual futures for those whom they imagine they are serving (Skocpol, 2005).

At the opening of the twenty-first century, it is within the context of an expanded methodological and analytical justice that we may hope better to understand and confront the persistent present realities of working-class young women in front of the enduring past images of female youth economic disadvantage that I have considered in this chapter. And here, the thinking of two social philosophers deeply suspicious of an essential and sovereign self operating only in the present through representation comes close together. It is for this reason that a continuation of action and the formation of a radical consciousness of historical events through temporal reflexivity within social science research practices requires our serious attention. ‘Up against the limits of deconstruction’ and language, ethical action in research may not always

constitute the principle of living ‘with not knowing in the face of the other’ (Lather, 2007: 6). Action may indeed represent a striving to know something about the other in past time through just institutions and methodological practices. In the words of Paul Ricoeur (2002: 290):

Institutions [and those of us who work within them] have the basic function of providing a temporal framework for human action. We are mortal beings. We attempt to put our action under the aegis of institutions [and forms of surplus meaning generated through an ethical temporality which can operate as reflexivity in method] that last longer than each of us. Again I quote Hannah Arendt, ‘the continuation of action’ may be the ultimate concern of ethical action.

Notes

- 1 A very small portion of the work in this chapter has been substantially adapted from earlier joint work with Anna van der Meulen, published as Dillabough, J. and A. van der Meulen. (2007). Female youth homelessness in contemporary urban Canada: Space, representation and the contemporary female subject. In J. McCleod and A. Allard (eds.), *Learning from the Margins: Women, Social Exclusion and Education*. New York: RoutledgeFalmer. I wish to thank Julie McCleod, Andrea Allard and Anna van der Meulen for allowing these adapted portions of this chapter to reappear here. I also wish to acknowledge funding from the Dean’s Research Award, UBC, the Social Sciences and Humanities Council of Canada, and the Spencer Foundation for supporting the research undertaken for this chapter. I also extend my gratitude to Phil Gardner, Roger Simon, Susan Sturman, Carolyn D’arcangelis, and all those who were students in my OISE and UBC Hannah Arendt seminars for their thoughtful contributions to the overall direction of this work.
- 2 The report commentary which typically accompanied photographs such as those represented from this series reads as follows:

This is no doubt due to the difference of opinion as to what constitutes slums. Originally, the term was applied to low, boggy back streets inhabited by a poor criminal population. The term as used here, however, applies . . . to poor, unsanitary houses, overcrowded, insufficiently lighted, badly ventilated, with unsanitary and in many cases, filthy yards, the very earth of which is reeking with kitchen slops and other refuse that have been thrown out several times daily, for want of a proper place to throw them.

- 3 Special thanks are extended here to Anna van der Meulen for uncovering the first set of images in Toronto.
- 4 My argument is that if methods of studying young women in the sociology of education and gender studies are to continue to mature analytically, then we should not view circulating approaches as oppositional – that is, language versus temporality or deconstruction versus phenomenological interpretation – or as in

either decline or ascendancy as they are conceptual terms within methodology that are much more like twins or deeply connected relatives to each other in intellectual history than we may have previously thought or understood.

- 5 Geertz (1990, 2000) calls this the 'frailties of memory' within the context of methodology.
- 6 As Wolkowitz (2006) argues, the theaters of meaning or the meanings and relations of power through conceptualizations of methodology always deepen with the specificity of each research account, and the 'truth' value (not 'truth' itself) of any research lies in its temporal specificity (as temporal meaning) and most certainly not, from my perspective, its objectivity or static ahistorical character.
- 7 These terms are borrowed from McRobbie (1982).
- 8 This latter set of documentary materials was proliferating particularly in the postwar period as progressive social welfare policies were put in place. This conception of social welfare cannot always be seen as straightforwardly progressive. However, earlier periods of social welfare must be read against the contemporary tide of neo-liberal policies which have eliminated the visibility of economically disadvantaged youth and their legitimate place in Canadian society. In 1999, for example, Bill 8 (i.e., anti-squeegeeing and begging legislation) enforced, through law, a 'clean up' of the streets. A report by an action group, CERA (Canadian Equality Rights Association), exposes this concern:

Bill 8, in CERA's view, conforms with the emerging patterns of Canadian legislators to show less and less concern about alleviating poverty and much more interest in legislating poverty into invisibility. This hostility toward poor people has manifest itself in unprecedented cuts to social assistance and social programs and now manifests itself in an attempt to criminalize poverty and homelessness. In promoting a society which is marred by depths of poverty that we have not seen in a generation in Ontario at the same time as criminalizing the poor in an unprecedented manner, this government is taking us back to the outlook of previous centuries.

(<http://www.equalityrights.org/cera/docs/Bill8Submission.html>,
November 1999)

- 9 See report on urban slums dated 1911, City of Toronto Archives.
- 10 The accompanying text reads:

{The environments} in which the children of the *poor* and *degenerate* class are reared, are such as must necessarily breed *immorality* and *crime*, and *vice*. The crowded habitations and filthy streets of the slums are a fertile soil in which to bring the seeds of fruition. Here the gardens of vice raise large crops.

- 11 As Sangster (2002: 3) observes: 'Protection meant the increased moral surveillance of working class and poor girls; protection meant "promiscuous girls who had not broken the law, but were deemed in need of moral re-education." Protection was always differentially applied according to class.'
- 12 Over the last several years, research accountability has undermined the value of rich descriptions of young women and their narrative accounts are often

repackaged as 'trauma narratives' that run off the page, hanging like paralyzing liberal portraits of female trauma.

- 13 Public representations often place women at the center of the 'poverty' narrative, giving them and their bodies more significance as victims in the explanation of youth poverty than class stratification, colonization, or women's social history in the state. Consequently, young women themselves emerge as the social problem rather than the configuration and operation of social policy.
- 14 *Epistemic posturing* is a term which describes how power and forms of hierarchy shape knowledge to elicit a particular and often dominant posture/position about individuals. This knowledge – such as representations of economically disadvantaged youth – is often presented as objective, neutral, or true in some substantial sense. Yet, as Bourdieu argues, knowledge is informed by public morality, values, and inherited assumptions about gender over time.
- 15 Such representations are analyzed in Dillabough and van der Meulen (2007).
- 16 For this task, I draw principally upon the work of Bourdieu, together with Descombes's (2000) and Massey's (1999) materialist notion of a cultural field and space as organized forms of social relations. And in order to conceptualize how representations of female youth 'poverty' signify a symbolic site of social control/regulation over the formation of female identity in the state, I turn to the epistemological and ontological concerns raised by Hannah Arendt, Shoshana Felman and Paul Ricoeur (Honig, 1995a, 1995b).
- 17 An illustration of how the cultural field of female homelessness might shape other urban landscapes, such as the law, is offered by Sangster (2002). An excellent source which explores the spatial/global dimensions of homelessness is offered by Wright (1997).
- 18 It should be clarified that phenomenology is, to some degree, making a 'comeback' in both social and educational theory.
- 19 See also Austin (1962) on the performative functions of language.
- 20 I am reminded here of Bauman's (2001: 79) reference to the issue of mobility as it relates to cosmopolitan forms of globalization: 'the globalized world is a hospitable and friendly place for tourists, but inhospitable and hostile to vagabonds. The latter are barred from following the pattern that the first have set. But that pattern was not meant for them in the first place.'
- 21 This also applies to Arendt's critique of metaphysics and the false idea of a true independent self free from the social conditions or the forms of intersubjectivity shaping the self in any 'social life world' (see Arendt, 1971).
- 22 Or its opposite – liberal redemption.
- 23 I am reminded here of Massey's (1995: 337) concern with space, social differentiation, and its links to concepts of globalization: 'The relationship of different social groups to the phenomenon of globalization varies widely. This, moreover, is a question not just of degrees of spatial mobility, but also of their type and quality – the degree of control one has over their own and others' movement, even the ease and style in which one travels.'
- 24 Drawing on the linguistic insights associated with the work of Emile Benveniste, Ricoeur identifies discourse as comprising events 'in which somebody says something to somebody about something' (Pellauer, 2007: 59).

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Getting lost

Critiquing across difference as methodological practice¹

Patti Lather

This chapter theorizes issues of reading across differences in educational research by looking at a very specific example of making connections across differences of history, geography, languages, disciplines, identity positions, and theoretical investments. My case study is Handel Wright's (2003) critique of Cynthia Dillard's (2000) 'endarkened feminist epistemology', a critique that was noteworthy for its respectful and generous reading of a position quite different from the critic's own. In what follows, my sense of task is to unpack Wright's critical practices and then attempt to enact such practices in a reading of Patricia Hill-Collins (2000) in a way that moves against what Wright (2003: 201) terms '(racially unmarked but remarkably white) feminist epistemologies'. Moving toward 'getting lost' as a methodology (Lather, 2007), I explore the implications of such critique for qualitative research by drawing on Eve Sedgwick's (1997) idea of 'reparative critique'.

'An endarkened feminist epistemology: identity, difference and the politics of representation'

Dillard's essay examines the 'life notes' of three African-American female academics in order to develop a cultural standpoint epistemology out of the intersectionalities of identities 'and the historical and contemporary contexts of oppression and resistance' for such women (Dillard, 2000: 661). Dillard's hope is to use Black women's experiences as a resource in opening up the educational research community to 'more culturally indigenous ways of knowing research and enacting leadership' (*ibid.*). Set against metaphors of research as neutral, Dillard posits an endarkened feminist epistemology as more ethical, responsible, and accountable in moving toward decolonizing methodologies. Situated within and against Scheurich and Young's (1997) call for a 'lively discussion' about the racialized dimensions of our research agendas and practices, narratives of experience are produced and 'mined' toward a theorization of 'the complexity of issues, identities, and politics' that shape Black women's lives in the academy (Dillard, 2000: 670–671). Dillard articulates six assumptions to guide culturally relevant inquiry that involve a

self-definition cultivated in response to the community to which one is responsible, spirituality, dialogic processes, a grounding in concrete experience, and the effects of 'the experiences and meanings within power asymmetrics' of Black women's voices in knowledge production and how these 'often alienating positionalities' might be transformed and transforming for educational research (*ibid.*: 678–679).

In responding to Dillard's essay, Wright's practice of critique includes three basic moves. First, he uses critique as a help in living the present historically. Unpacking Dillard's concepts to foster understanding on her terms, he names her refusals as strategic and relates them to pop culture in a way that ties them to an enlivened sense of 'what's going on' in the culture at large. Situating Dillard's exemplarity in terms of new moves in qualitative research, he announces himself 'in solidarity' (Wright 2003: 209) with her project, a project that he sees as 'the next major intervention in the field' (*ibid.*: 210). Honoring the challenge Dillard represents, Wright calls for educational research to 'make room at the table' (*ibid.*: 209) for racialized work, work he considers long overdue.

Second, Wright engages with Dillard's work to construct not competition but parallel conceptualizations. Clear differences remain in an analytic he offers not as a successor regime but as expansion and multiplication of ways to proceed. Finding her notion of an endarkened feminist epistemology a 'particularly interesting, compelling and expedient example' (*ibid.*: 199), he asks how it 'might look from a different theoretical perspective' (*ibid.*: 204). Proliferating versions of an endarkened epistemology, he offers a reformulation where the subject 'could be reconceptualized' (*ibid.*: 207) to take into account difference within blackness. Such a move 'could yield interesting results' (*ibid.*) where racialized identity becomes 'a floating signifier' that is 'more inclusive and pliant' (*ibid.*: 208). Offering a messier parallel frame, he uses Stuart Hall to call upon the end of Black innocence and neat formulas of Black victims and White oppressors.

Finally, Wright traces his own rethinkings in a generous and admittedly guilty reading of Dillard's project. Reading her through his own investments and experiences, particularly his relationship to 'the international phenomenon of black ambivalence' (*ibid.*: 204) toward the postmodern, poststructural, and psychoanalytic, he puts the post to 'ambivalent, wary use' (*ibid.*) as he situates her intervention in discursive terms. Here, Dillard's Black feminist and Africanist standpoint becomes a place from which to begin, 'rather than a final, fixed position from which to speak' (*ibid.*: 206).²

Such practices of critique across differences enlarge both the critic and that which they critique. Like Derrida (2001: 36) on Barthes, Wright goes 'to what is most living . . . its force and necessity' in Dillard. To explore how such practices might be of use, I turn to an effort to read Patricia Hill Collins across our differences.

Racially marked White: reading Patricia Hill-Collins' 'What's going on? Black feminist thought and the politics of postmodernism'

In an effort to foster understanding on her own terms, whatever 'foundational' means these days, Hill-Collins' work is clearly foundational for academics trying to deal with the experiences and negotiations of US racial formations. In her contribution to *Working the Ruins* (2000), an edited collection on feminist poststructural work in education, Hill-Collins displays the Black ambivalence toward 'the post' of which Wright speaks. While postmodernism 'undercuts African-American women's political activism . . . eschews social policy recommendations,' (Hill-Collins 2000: 41) and engages in textual reductionism and other hermeticisms, the deconstructive tools it offers can be put to 'good use' by intellectuals from oppressed groups (*ibid.*: 54). Deconstruction of binaries, however, is a double-edged sword, undercutting authority, yes, but also undercutting the very 'modest authority' to speak of and from their own experiences for which Black women have struggled (*ibid.*: 58). Such contradictions, coupled with the excesses of 'extreme' postmodernism with its relativism, occlusion of 'macro-social-structural variables' (*ibid.*: 59), and 'alienated subjects endlessly deconstructing all truth' (*ibid.*), create a kind of cultural capital for alienated leftist intellectuals who have lost all hope in a way that works, exactly, to reproduce present power inequities. While applauding the efforts of a 'reconstructive postmodernism' toward politically effective theory (*ibid.*: 65), Hill-Collins as well takes such efforts to task for their 'rubric of difference' which, more often than not, trivializes structural inequities, appropriates and commodifies the voices of 'others', and feeds a corrosive narcissism and rampant individualism. The result is 'diluting differences to the point of meaninglessness' in a way that undercuts forms of cultural politics that work toward group solidarity and a politics of resistance. Holding out the promise of theories of intersectionality, Hill-Collins notes both the legitimizing function of the post in such an effort and its dangers as 'the new politics of containment' and 'a politics of impotence' (*ibid.*: 66). Black women and other marginalized intellectuals did not need the post in order to challenge authority, but the post, she concludes, offers 'a much-needed legitimation' and 'powerful analytic tools' to challenge 'the rules of the game itself' (*ibid.*: 67).

To use her title, what is going on in this essay and how might I use Wright's critical practices to read Hill-Collins across our differences in a way that productively addresses its force and necessity?

Critique as a help in living the present historically

Hill-Collins' work is laden with the philosophical and political history of our time. What she marks and influences in such landscapes, including the

academy out of which she writes, are the 'still open wounds, scars and hopes' of Black women that can 'teach us about what remains to be heard, read, thought and done' (Derrida, 2001: 118). What retains an exemplary value for me in her work, the something to be heard here, is a focus on how strategic essentialism is essential for an oppressed people whose individual lives may be markedly different, but who none the less suffer from a common form of racial hegemony. This tension around a realist position that mediates the essentialism of identity politics is a mark of postcolonialism in its use of histories of exploitation to foster strategies of resistance (Bhabha, 1990; Spurr, 1999). This is no new news in postcolonial theory (e.g., McBride, 1989), but the promise of Hill-Collins' work lies in how the tensions that never quite resolve themselves, this tension between modernist authenticity and poststructural conceptions of identity and subjectivity, use ambivalence as a strategy for surviving disappointments.

Critique as an offering of parallel theorizing

It is this ambivalence that I want to put at the heart of my efforts to engage with Hill-Collins from a different theoretical perspective in order to see how such an expansion, multiplication, and proliferation might work in solidarity with her. The theory I call on is queer theory, particularly Eve Sedgwick's (1997: 3) idea of reparative critique that calls for a 'deroutinizing methodology' that shakes out the impacted and overdetermined in moving from truth-value to performative effect. Breaking from the habits of critical theory, Sedgwick urges practices of critique that assemble and confer plenitude on something that can then 'give back' toward nurturing resistant culture in a way that helps save oneself by extracting sustenance from a culture not very interested in one's sustenance. Sedgwick calls this 'a gay alchemy' (*ibid.*: 34) and draws on the energy of an incompetent reading and its pleasures, discoveries, surprises, and mistakes (*ibid.*: 25). These are 'compromise formations that define life in the closet' (Litvak, 1997: 84). They nurture positive affect around abjection and perform how good things can come from bad object choices in terms of something other than blandly routinized relations. Termed a 'gift for inversion' (*ibid.*: 76), such a practice turns abjection into a site of possibility in extracting sustenance from hostile territory. Using queer theory, I offer parallel conceptualizations to Hill-Collins' theorizing about identity and 'working the ruins' as a political practice (St. Pierre and Pillow, 2000).

Identity

If postcolonialism teaches us nothing else, its emphasis on the differentiated meaning of subjectivity and agency has driven home how critical antifoundationalism can function as a neo-imperialist elitism. What Samir Dayal (1996: 135) has termed 'pissedcolonialism' cannot be dismissed as poststructuralism's

poor second cousin, still mired in a realism that is viewed as 'strategic' at best. Essentialism and identity politics might be bad objects from the vantage point of antifoundational theory, but they are often seen as the only, if not the best, strategy for advancing minority-based claims. The desire to cultivate a past self-consciously to fight homogenization and/or invisibility, the desire to combat mainstream racism with a politicized deployment of one's own 'difference': such strategies raise questions as to what there is of identity that is not strategy (Radhakrishnan, 1996: 207). Such strategies also construct a kind of melancholy subject position for the 'authentic' native charged with showing how they are bound by that which the dominant has long abjected. What opens up if the problem of authenticity is seen as about relationality, ambivalence, and the politics of representation as a way to fight its tendencies to 'degenerate into essentialism' (*ibid.*: 211)? This entails a sense of both what can be done in the name of identity that is worth hanging on to *and* what is made possible by practices that thrive on troubling identity.

Queer theory's contesting of good object/bad object distinctions trouble that which is legitimated and authorize the bad as having something good to offer. Drag, for example, whether of the queens or kings variant, denaturalizes gender construction in pleasurable ways. The exclusions upon which consolidated identity are based become apparent in such practices, as well as the policing and hierarchy of the good and the bad. This is a necessary and productive persistent troubling that keeps the normative from setting up shop. What I suggest is that such practices are a sort of 'working the ruins' of identity that might have something to offer in terms of the (in)essential base of solidarity that is both within and against the intersectionality that Hill-Collins advances.³

'Working the ruins' as a political practice

What I offer, perhaps to both Hill-Collins and myself, is to welcome decentering one's discourse via the othernesses that always confront us, the 'irreducible strangenesses' involved in other othernesses. My example here is a sort of queering of my parallel theorizing of Hill-Collins, a thinking that opens to other others. Situating both her and myself as world citizens perpetually renewing meanings toward new structures of knowledge, such a position asks what can come about, be allowed to come about, in our being exposed to the other in a way that 'dislocates . . . in the space of what relates us to ourselves . . . by getting over, by ourselves, the mourning of ourselves' (Derrida, 2001: 160–161). What lets her in me is 'the mourning of the absolute of force'. Here essentialism and experience as a ground of truth-claims are situated as both good and bad objects, as is also situated what Coco Fusco (2001: xvi) calls 'the many-headed monster that the backlash against identity politics has become'. To urge a troubling of the closures and sometimes pieties of identity politics, standpoint theories, and experience-based knowledge *and*

the backlash against identity politics is not to try to close this openness but to keep us moving in order to produce and learn from ruptures, failures, breaks, refusals. Given that the task is to find a way to work on in the face of the loss of legitimating meta-narratives, always already swept up in language games that constantly undo themselves, we are all a little lost in finding our way into research practices that open to the irreducible heterogeneity of the other as we face the problems of doing research in this historical time.

This is a gay science, both Nietzschean and in excess of Nietzsche, that is something other to the 'hip defeatism' that concerns Hill-Collins.⁴ Recovering from exhaustion in order to perceive the world freshly, such critique works toward a re-enchantment that is not so much about the relentless unmasking and engrossing demystification of standard critical moves as it is about extracting nourishment from what is bad for you by having failed to deliver. Newly desired in its contemptibility, this is the hom(e)pathy of a gay science where the path to an opening is via ambivalence in working the mediating power of cultural difference. Here, to risk thinking otherwise is not to find an innocent place, but to use the tensions as a way of learning how to live in de-authorized space.

Whatever the post means, the frame of our present has shifted out of changed material circumstances. Basic political categories that have defined and animated left oppositional discourse have lost their political purchase. Enlightenment categories of rationality, individual autonomy, revolution, socialism, proletarian democracy, all these and more are under suspicion. Terms such as post-ethnic and post-feminism are everywhere, troubling our efforts to read history as a story of progress toward emancipation. How to deal with such losses without nostalgia is, I am arguing, exactly a politics of working the ruins. Here accepting loss becomes the very force of learning and the promise of thinking and doing otherwise, within and against Enlightenment categories of voice, identity, agency, and experience so troubled by incommensurability, historical trauma, and the crisis of representation.

Critique as a tracing of re-thinkings

Finally, I come to my own re-thinkings as I engage with Hill-Collins across our different investments of privilege and struggle. I think here of a 2001 trip to South Africa where I was one of three US academics brought in to foster a research culture in a historically disadvantaged university. Such a brief brought me face to face with the contradictions of White expertise and the necessary complicities and forms of dominance involved in addressing someone as subaltern. Losing my voice at the end of an intense week, my title for anything I write, I joked, must be: 'White woman goes to Africa and loses her voice'. This was not at all because I was unhearable in a Spivakian 'can the subaltern speak' sort of way but quite the opposite: I talked so much and so loudly, over the excitement in the room, I like to think, that for the first time in my life,

I was unable to speak. Hill-Collins helps me think ‘what’s going on here?’, where, as a White woman, I live in a perpetually strange time where I am always ‘writing/speaking something that will have been wrong’. Here, whatever authority I have is grounded in the prejudices of the historical context and, whether my recognition of this strange time authorizes or de-authorizes me, its danger is to claim the present as a state of knowing the difference in a way that allays the anxiety fostered in any interruption of the progress narrative.⁵

In this lived experience of what Derrida refers to as the ‘future anterior tense’, words that I begin to hear otherwise in my reading of Hill-Collins include my call to a methodology of ‘getting lost’. Perhaps my addressee here is usefully constrained to those who have privileges to unlearn along lines of the sort of ‘scrupulously differentiated politics’ for which Spivak (1999: 193) calls. Rather than some angst of displacement, this might be the effacement that I have been trying to track across Derrida for years. This is a demastering:

a work without force, a work that would have to work at renouncing force, its own force, a work that would have to work at failure, and thus at mourning and getting over force, a work working at its own unproductivity, absolutely, working to absolve or to absolve itself of whatever might be absolute about ‘force’.

(Derrida, 2001: 144)

This is getting lost as a way to move out of commanding, controlling, mastery discourses and into a knowledge that recognizes the inevitable blind spots of our knowing. Here the trajectory is from the unknown to the known, with an inversion that returns to the unknown (Bataille, 1988: 110–111). Derrida (1995: 289) argues that knowledge that interrupts or derails absolute knowledge is knowledge that loses itself, ‘gets off the track’ in order to expose itself to chance, ‘as if to the being lost’ in order ‘to learn by heart’, knowledge from and of the other, thanks to the other.

Performance artist and critical theorist Coco Fusco (2001: xv) argues that 1995–2000 was a time of ‘sweeping changes in the approach to otherness’, a time of ‘normalized diversity’. Noting the importance of practices of ‘see[ing] ourselves as “other than the other”’ (*ibid.*: xiv), she writes both against how ethnicizing oneself can become a box (*ibid.*: 34) and for the ambivalence that undercuts ‘ideal antiracist’ normative subjectivities. She also takes much to task the backlash against identity politics. Troubling Derrida’s perhaps too easy evocation of some ‘other’, the very other that concerns Hill-Collins as commodification and dilution, Fusco puts ambivalence to work in the necessarily incompletely thinkable conditions and potential of given arrangements. Is it helpful to think of all of us, Fusco, Hill-Collins, Wright, Dillard, and Derrida and Sedgwick too, as a little lost, caught in enabling aporias that move

us toward practices that produce different knowledge and produce knowledge differently? Reading Hill-Collins through the prism of Wright's practices of critique has taught me to ask: who is this us, White girl, and how does an investment in reading for 'scrupulously differentiated' positionalities affect methodological practices?

Implications for qualitative research: theorizing issues of reading across differences

I was thus read, I said to myself, and staged by what I read.

(Derrida, 2001: 161)

For several years, I have been writing about the concept of coloring epistemologies (Scheurich and Young, 1997) in a way that attempts not to reinscribe successor regimes or 'one-best' arguments.⁶ Increasingly drawn to the helpfulness of situating this work as always already wrong, I began with a call for epistemological distinctions via a delineation of the cultural specificities of methodological practices, a mistake from which a Foucauldian move to discursive formations allowed me to escape. A year or so ago, I referred to such efforts as a useful disciplinary mistake that is other to the other of correct, borrowing from Spivak's (1999) situating of the concept of 'native informant' in *White anthropology*. Now, following Wright's move of parallel theorizing, I situate my efforts as expanding and multiplying possibilities toward a gay science, a science toward surviving and thriving in hostile territory. What do the critical practices I have put to work in this chapter suggest in terms of issues of positionality, methodology, and epistemology in qualitative research?

- 1 Cultural epistemologies construct a site from which to speak knowledge within racial formations where racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed. Within such formations, ways of speaking about race change via incorporation of new and old racialized languages. These are not about essence so much as positioning toward the development of transformative, decolonizing, survival research agendas (Tyson, 1998; Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999; Dillard, 2006).
- 2 Research methodologies arise out of these complex maneuvers of identity and relational mediations toward activating praxis. Articulation of 'diasporic methodologies' (Subedi, 2002) grows out of theorizing strategic operations of a 'stable' identity to both disrupt dominance and register alternative practices within the 'tensions of empire' (Willinsky, 1998). Working toward non-essentialist indigenous identities that are fluid yet political and non-coercive while enabling pragmatic, transformative practices is to ask, like Foucault, what can identities do?
- 3 Working ambivalence as a strategy for surviving disappointment in transcendental promises cuts across both mainstream and counter discourses,

- including what Spivak (1999: 67–68) terms the ‘new new’ of ‘the indigent dominant’. Across the different disavowals and disidentifications of differently positioned researchers, varying tensions arise regarding modernist and postmodernist identity formations and deconstructive tendencies to appropriate difference to the same. In such ‘scrupulously differentiated’ spaces, our very not-knowing becomes a productive space to move from transcendental to social grounds, historical grounds in exploring (post-)emancipation discourses as limit and resource (*ibid.*: 55).
- 4 Out of this, across broken and uneven spaces, we have a chance to ‘unlearn more in the field’ (Subedi, 2002) by reading against ourselves in presuming not understanding but ourselves as incompetent readers reading for difference rather than sameness in order to be unsettled by otherness (Lather, 2000). Courting a more uncontainable excess than that of intersectionality, a sort of multiplicities without end, this is working multiple othernesses as a way to keep moving against tendencies to settle into the various dogmas and reductionisms that await us once we think we have arrived.
 - 5 Such a move might be termed a ‘methodology of getting lost’ (Lather, 2007) toward a science based less on knowledge than on an awareness of epistemic limits where constitutive unknowingness becomes an ethical resource and aporetic suspension becomes an ethical practice of undecidability. ‘Respect[ing] the demand for complexity’ (McCall, 2005: 1786), especially a ‘categorical complexity’ (*ibid.*: 1774), such a move is spurred by both the critique of feminism by women of color and the varied ‘post’ movements that have so troubled Western philosophy, history, and language. Such a stance raises troubling questions about how we think about how we think and learning to learn differently where ‘giving voice’, ‘dialogue’, ‘telling and testifying’, and ‘empowerment’ have lost their innocence. Such a stance resets the theoretical agenda in what Braidotti (2005) refers to as ‘post-post’ times toward embodied materialisms, situated epistemologies, scattered hegemonies, and disseminated hybridities. The task is to do justice to the complexity and instability of all of this in addition to the dislocated identities of post-humanism that challenge oppositions of language/material and culture/nature.

Getting Lost (Lather, 2007) attempts to summarize such methodological practices. In that book, I explore what is beginning to take shape in the displacements that abound across a broad array of trends and movements in the field of feminist methodology: ‘the ability of not knowing’ (Davis, 2002); holding open a space for treating the ‘*not known*’ creatively (Martin, 2001: 378); ‘a challenge to *learn*, and not to *know*’ (Probyn, 2000: 54); the limits of empathy, voice, and authenticity (Lather, 2002); and ‘to persistently not know something important’ (Kostkowska, 2004). Much of this echoes what Gayatri Spivak has been saying for years in terms of learning to learn from below.

Alongside unlearning our privilege as a loss, more recently, Spivak (2000) urges that we move toward 'claiming transformation' and standing together as subjects of globalization as we acknowledge complicity in order to act in less dangerous ways in a 'non-Euro-US world'. Kostkowska (2004: 199) captures such moves well in her essay on the work of Nobel Prize-winning poet Wislawa Szymborska's privileging of uncertainty and doubt where we are fortunate to not-know precisely: 'This is not a will *not* to know, as the condition of ignorance, but an ability to engage with what escapes propositions and representation.'

Up against the limits of deconstruction, the task becomes to 'live with its not knowing in the face of the Other' (Butler, 2001: 17). To not-want to not-know is a violence to the Other, a violence that obliterates how categories and norms both constrain *and* enable. 'We must follow a double path in politics,' Butler (*ibid.*: 23) urges, using familiar terms and categories but also 'yielding our most fundamental categories' to what they rend unknown. This is the double(d) science I am calling for, a double task that works the necessary tensions that structure our methodology as fertile ground for the production of new practices.

Here, the end of 'the West and the rest' sort of thinking is revalenced as hardly news. The task is to reanimate via that which is still alive in a minimally normative way that does not reinscribe mastery. By creating new spaces on the edge of the intelligible, projects are put at risk rather than set up for accommodational inclusion or positioned to claim a 'better' vantage point. Work is situated as ruined from the start, a symptomatic site of the limits of our knowing. Here, something begins to take shape, perhaps some new 'line of flight' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) where we are not so sure of ourselves and where we see this not knowing as our best chance for a different sort of doing in the name of qualitative research.

Conclusion

This chapter is part of 'answering the call' to address issues of race, racism, and power in educational research.⁷ My effort, situated on the 'interventionist, critical edge of deconstruction' (Niranjana, 1992: 161) follows Barthes in his "desperate resistance to any reductive system", where, whenever the language begins to harden, "I would gently leave it and seek elsewhere: I began to speak differently" (quoted in Derrida, 2001: 53). Exceeded, interrupted, and dislocated in transcultural space, I have attempted to (un)learn from Wright, Dillard, Hill-Collins, and other others in order to move toward a practice of critique that is racially marked and generative of research approaches that are responsible to the struggle for voice, the possibilities and limits of connecting across difference, and the productivity of simultaneous tension and reparation in solidarity efforts.

Notes

- 1 An earlier version of this chapter was presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, April 2002, New Orleans.
- 2 In a response, Dillard (2003: 229) foregrounds their solidarity in violating academic norms and restates her take on positionality versus essence, finding that she and Wright are 'rarely far apart "for real"'.
- 3 See McCall (2005) for a call for intersectionality that includes the strategic use of advanced quantitative techniques and large data sets as more adequate in dealing with the empirical intersectionality that characterizes the 'new inequality' and the public policy arenas involved. While there is much to be admired in McCall's discussion of intersectionality, her rather overrehearsed (mis)understandings of postmodernism echo those of Hill-Collins, particularly pitting critical realism against 'postmodern relativism' and assuming the collapse of the structural into the discursive.
- 4 Hill-Collins' charges parallel Martha Nussbaum's complaint of 'hip defeatism' against Judith Butler in her 1999 *New Republic* review of Butler's four books on sex and gender. By turning away from the materiality of oppression and reform via legislation and public policy, Butler is accused of undercutting feminist activism. See Turner (2000: 6–7) for a critique of the liberal politics undergirding Nussbaum's critique of Butler.
- 5 From a February 15, 2002 talk at OSU by Elizabeth Povinelli, based on her book, *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), where she explores how multicultural forms of recognition work to reinforce liberal regimes rather than open them up to alternative social imaginaries. Based on ethnographic fieldwork with Australian indigenous people, she argues that the multicultural legacy of colonialism perpetuates unequal systems of power, not by demanding that colonized subjects identify with their colonizers but by demanding that they identify with an impossible standard of authentic traditional culture, producing in the process a new melancholic form of indigenous citizenship.
- 6 See Lather (2006) for an argument against successor regimes and for a Foucauldian 'wild profusion' in teaching research in education.
- 7 See Tyson (1998); Dillard (2000); Subedi (2002); Scheurich and Young (1997); Pillow (2001, forthcoming); Hermes (1998); Ladson-Billings (2000); and Parker and Lynn (2002). See also 2002's special issue of *Qualitative Inquiry* on Critical Race Theory and Qualitative Research, 8(1), edited by Marvin Lynn, Tara Yosso, Daniel Solorzano, and Laurence Parker; and 2006's special issue of *Qualitative Studies in Education* on De/Colonizing Education: Examining Transnational Localities, 19(5), edited by Jeong-Eun Rhee and Sharon Subreenduth.

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Writing on cellophane

Studying teen women's sexual desires,
inventing methodological release
points

Sara I. McClelland and Michelle Fine

Why cellophane?

In this chapter, we theorize methods to study teen women's sexual desires. Our title stems from a concern that young women's desires come to be laminated in cellophane. We see layers of cellophane being produced by: a market economy that rushes to commodify young female bodies; sociopolitical, moral, and heteronormative panics that obsess over young women's sexualities; racist imagery and institutional practices that vilify the sexualities of women of color; and by schools increasingly kidnapped by the policy of teaching abstinence-only-until-marriage curricula in place of serious sexuality education (see Fine and McClelland, 2006, 2007). In this chapter, we are particularly interested in *methods* to study sexual desires as they are narrated, embodied, and enacted by young women in this political context. Wrapped in a kind of *collective discursive cellophane*, we believe it may be difficult for them to speak as their tongues are weighed down with dominant assumptions and panics; and, similarly, our ears may be clogged with our own dominant (feminist) discourses for *their* desires.

In this essay, we ask: how can critical feminist theories and methods account for the layers of discursive cellophane that instruct young women to be ashamed, guilty, provocative, hot, dissociated, and/or regretful about their sexualities? Like many critical feminist researchers, we wonder about the process of researching a *subject* that is continually objectified and distorted through public and private scrutiny and regulation. How do we craft methods that acknowledge these political and discursive contexts – including the varied (yet limited) positions available to and imposed upon young women – and still manage to understand something about what it means to be a young woman living and developing sexually in the early decades of the twenty-first century?

The methodological dilemma

As they mature, young women learn specific lessons about what is permitted and what is expected of them. We live today in a culture in which teen women's

sexual desire has been commodified: that is, made into something that can be sold in the market place. Parallel to (and sometimes in response to) this sexual marketing, a series of federal and state policies and laws have been implemented ostensibly to 'protect' young women from commodification, disease, pregnancy, their peers, older men, the Internet, predators, and the list goes on.

Our methodological dilemma revolves around our desire to theorize a wide range of young women's 'desires' in a social climate in which teen women's sexuality is read alternately as *vulnerable* (especially for White and elite young women), *confused* (lesbian, bi, or queer young women), or *dangerous* (young women of color). Our dilemma deepens when, in conversations with us, so many young women themselves speak fluently in the hegemonic, heteronormative, racist, and sometimes misogynistic discourses, and yet stammer when they are asked to speak about where desire lives in their own bodies.

Various feminist researchers have noted these gaps in women's descriptions of themselves. The 'missing discourse of desire', heard in both personal and institutional discourses, has been well documented (Allen, 2004; Diamond, 2005; Elliott, 2003; Fine, 1988; Fine and McClelland, 2006; Tolman, 1994, 2002). More recently, however, we have become interested in the political and cultural brakes that impress on young women. In our chapter in Anita Harris's (2008) volume on young women and post-'wave' feminism, we try to 'rescue a theory of sexual excess', arguing that:

we now believe that the missing discourse of desire hasn't been missing at all. Perhaps, just perhaps, researchers (at minimum) haven't figured out how to mobilize cultural practices (including critical research methods) that would allow utterances of young women's desire to breathe. Perhaps we haven't figured out how to move slowly enough towards understanding, how to neutralize the cultural brakes that shut it down in public, in research, and in the body.

(McClelland and Fine, 2008b: 96–97)

While we, too, hear the stammering and the silence from young women, we want to play out here the possibility that the silence is not an absence, but perhaps something else: *an absence we know to be present*. We take the position that young women's desires have been overwritten as taboo, converted into a product to be sold, drenched in biographies of violence or shame, silenced and made dangerous, or displayed provocatively on MySpace pages. If we shift the discussion of young female sexual desire from one of missingness to one of present but laminated in political and cultural cellophane, the theoretical task of the feminist researcher shifts from documenting the loss and silencing to investigating the varied strategies by which desires are buried, forming and yet emergent: spoken, embodied, performed, and/or enacted. It is a subtle but important modification in how we imagine the role of feminist research in this area.

Below we try to unravel the layers of this methodological dilemma and offer some very tentative and very partial – written in pencil – ideas for method. We begin with an overview of the political and discursive forces that produce the cellophane. Reviewing the commercial performances of hypersexuality by young women and the moral panics inscribed in government policies on teen sexuality, we provide a cursory look at how the market, politics, and popular culture (im)press on young women's bodies. From there we move into data – eavesdropping on a focus group we conducted with young urban high school women, where we asked them to teach us about what they and their peers needed to know about sex. Third, we consider various strategies for critical analysis of this focus group material, how to listen and interpret with 'faith', but also with 'suspicion' as Ruthellen Josselson (2004) has suggested. Finally, we offer a set of methodological strategies which we think may enable researchers interested in the ghostly presence of young women's desire. We envision these methodologies as 'release points' because they remind us to see desire as released or releasable, curdling and circulating, fleeing and fleeting, performed and repressed, rapping and wrapped. We hope to suggest research methodologies that can fracture and warp the light that is already highlighting every move a young woman makes.

Commodification and moral panics: young women's bodies, the market, and the state

Young women today live in an era of sexual surveillance, continuously viewed from every possible angle. As they transition from girl to woman, they are closely monitored by the market place, popular culture, and neo-liberal policies aimed at minors, such as abstinence-only-until-marriage education and parental notification for abortion laws. Within these contexts, young women are excellent students and learn that sexual thoughts and behaviors are things to be sold, feared, loathed, or all of these. But they also learn there is much to be gained from sexual performances and displays of horniness, often in front of cameras.

To highlight the landscape of commodification and moral panics, we turn to Ariel Levy's analysis in her book, *Female Chauvinistic Pigs* (2005). Levy describes what she terms 'raunch culture' – a cultural paradigm that privileges the *performance* of sexual desire rather than the *experience* of desire. Interviewing women who remove their clothes for cameras and kiss other women to turn men on, Levy describes an elite culture that values a 'tawdry, tarty, cartoonlike version of female sexuality' (Levy, 2005: 1). For example, she asks us to consider the following scenes:

I first noticed it several years ago. I would turn on the television and find strippers in pasties explaining how best to lap dance a man to orgasm. I would flip the channel and see babes in tight, tiny uniforms bouncing

up and down on trampolines. Britney Spears was becoming increasingly popular and increasingly unclothed and her undulating body ultimately became so familiar to me . . . People I knew (female people) liked going to strip clubs (female strippers). It was sexy and fun they explained; it was liberating and rebellious. My best friend from college, who used to go to Take Back the Night marches on campus, had become captivated by porn stars.

(Ibid.: 1–4)

bell hooks, Tricia Rose, Monique Ward, Carla Stokes, and others also write on young women's sexualities, hoisted theoretically at the intersection of critical race theory and popular culture, cataloging the images of Black young women in videos, MTV, and on young women's own web pages (hooks, 1996; Rose, 2003; Ward, 2003; Stokes, 2007). Profoundly misogynistic and racist images are performed and rehearsed. For instance, Jones's (1997) study of music videos shown on Black Entertainment Television (BET) reports that 42 percent of hip-hop videos featured sexual fondling, 42 percent featured women wearing hot pants, and 58 percent featured a female dancing sexually (cited in Ward, 2003). Carla Stokes (2007) has studied Black American adolescent girls' web pages, their own self-representations, finding the performances of dominant scripts such as 'Freaks, Virgins, Down-Ass Chicks/Bitches, Pimpettes and Resisters' filling the pages.

In combination, these performances beg the question: how do we read these performances of desire by young women, even as we recognize that sales, as well as heteronormativity, racism, and male gaze, are central to these scripts? How are young women engaging dominant scripts? To what extent are they resisting *and* internalizing them, selling their bodies through these scripts and yet holding a(nother) space, perhaps, for desire? The material available in popular culture, such as the 'oral sex panics' reviewed below, can always be read critically through triple lenses: as evidence of market commodification, as performance of popular culture, and/or as assertion of agentic selves. This is where we intervene theoretically with a bookmark of critical analysis: where do we read young women's desires in these performances? Are we naive to believe that desire remains in partial eclipse?

Consider the middle/high school oral sex scandals. A rash of anecdotes and media reports describe young girls/women performing oral sex on young boys/men in public displays (e.g., Rockdale County in 1999; Tolman, 1999). At 'rainbow parties' in Minnesota, purportedly 'girls wear different colored lipstick . . . and the goal is to get as many different colored rings on their penises by night's end'. At 'chicken head parties [in Florida] . . . girls supposedly gave oral sex to boys at the same time thus bobbing their heads up and down like chickens'. And our very favorite, in New Jersey: 'oral sex was becoming the ultimate bar mitzvah gift in one community, given under the table during the reception hidden by long tablecloths' (Gelperin, 2004: 64;

Levy, 2005: 139). These examples can be (and have been) read in a number of ways – as evidence of the moral breakdown of the American teenager, and, conversely, as an overly dramatized media-fueled ‘moral panic’ around teen, and particularly female, sex.

Many feminist researchers have noted this conflation of commodification, development, and sexualization – especially for young women and girls – and its confusing relationship to desire (APA, 2007; Harris, 2005; Merskin, 2004; Nelson, 2000). Indeed, the American Psychological Association Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls (2007) asserts, ‘there is no question that girls (and boys) grow up in a cultural milieu saturated with sexualizing messages’ and argues for increased research on the impact of hypersexualized cultural messages on female sexual development. This position has been echoed in the press. One writer recently noted that the proliferation of ‘sexy’ imagery surrounding girls and young women was impossible to miss:

Ten-year-old girls can slide their low-cut jeans over ‘eye-candy’ panties. French maid costumes, garter belt included, are available in preteen sizes. Barbie now comes in a ‘bling-bling’ style, replete with halter top and go-go boots. And it’s not unusual for girls under 12 to sing, ‘Don’t cha wish your girlfriend was hot like me?’

(Weiner, 2007)

With all of this teen ‘sex’ in the air, a third force has entered the picture, joining the market and popular culture, to ‘save the girl child’. That is, from fundamentalist religious groups and from the US government, there is a considerable policy rush to protect girls and young women, with racialized representations of ‘the girl’ diverging in significant ways (Bay-Cheng, 2003; Meyers, 2004; Millard and Grant, 2006).

Strange allies come together in the crusade to ‘protect’ girls and young women. Replaying historic alliances between conservatives and feminists (seen previously in struggles around prohibition of alcohol, pornography, prostitution, human trafficking, and most recently debates about the wearing of hijab in Europe), on the issue of young women’s sexuality and abuse, some feminist interests *fundamentally* overlap with those of social conservatives. Both presumably want to protect young women. And, with enormous ambivalence, we include ourselves here as well. Girls and young women are, and are seen as, vulnerable. The trouble is that the dominant response is to portray girls and young women as *lacking the capacity* psychologically or physically to manage the pressure, expectations, and attention that are heaped upon their sexually developing bodies *and*, therefore, they are denied the education, networks, resources, opportunities, and second chances that would *build capacity and community* for healthy sexual development. As adults rush in to ‘save’ and ‘protect’, they undermine girls’ and young women’s development, rendering them ultimately more vulnerable.

We worry greatly about the dangers of a discourse cast in the language of protection sculpted into social policies. An example (Fine and McClelland, 2007) of this slippage from state-protection ideology to state-regulation policy occurred in 2003 when Kansas Attorney General Phillip Kline released an opinion which *legally mandated that all adults who interacted with minors* must report any sexual activity (consensual or nonconsensual) involving youth less than sixteen years old (Kline, 2003). Teachers, physicians, nurses, and therapists would therefore be legally required to report all minors under sixteen who engaged in any type of sexual activity (even developmentally appropriate and consensual sexual activity). These youth, in turn, would be prosecuted as victims or aggressors of sexual abuse.

In this legal maneuver, the state of Kansas attempted¹ to position itself as the prosecutor and protector of all teenage sexual activity and attempted to prevent trained adults from providing young people (and, in particular, young women) with information, support, or advice in sexual matters. In the name of state protection, a punishing moral framework was to be laid atop all forms of teen sexuality *and* public supports for youth withheld.

In a similar duet of government-sponsored moralizing about teen sex paired with withholding of support, the proliferation of abstinence-only-until-marriage education has been paired, politically, with legal moves to restrict minors' rights to emergency contraception and abortion (see Fine and McClelland, 2007). Like the Kansas action, these policies align *against* teen sex, abortion, contraception, and gay and lesbian relationships, thereby threatening the possibility of open and educational conversations about sexual desires and dangers.

Rasmussen *et al.* (2004: 3) offer a stunning analysis of how 'protectionist' discourses subvert the developmental needs of queer youth:

Contemporary understandings of youth make it nearly impossible for young people to embrace non-normative identities or take possession of their bodies and their lives. With these understandings reigning supreme, is it any surprise that an entire regime of social service programs, modeled on child-saving concepts, has emerged in the past two decades, intended to 'service' and 'protect' queer youth? When such cultures insist on seeing 'good' young people as asexual, how can there be a lesbian seventh-grader? When society constructs teenagers as the chattel property of their adult parents, how can we talk about a young person's right to forge his or her own gender identity? When schools embrace abstinence-only approaches to sex, how can we begin a dialogue about young people's sexual pleasure?

The fear of teen desires, masked as public policy and worry, leaves young women (and queer boys) quite literally holding the bag, the baby, the disease, the responsibility, the shame, and sometimes the police record, all in the name of protection. The neo-liberal state, infused with fundamentalist values, is punishing the bodies

of youth – students of color and queer youth, in particular – constraining and shaming teen sexual subjectivities, bodies, and souls. Let us be clear – there are many, many things that put young women in danger and we are not suggesting that these threats are invented. Rather, we are highlighting what happens to young women who grow up and develop with the constant din of alarms in their ears when we publicly and privately imagine them and their bodies as portals to danger. Like others writing about the current loss of civil liberties both nationally and internationally (ACLU, 2003; Cassel, 2004; Cornehl, 2003), we wonder what is lost, for whom, for how long, and with what consequences, launched in the *name of protection*.

We turn now to listen in on how young women speak of their sexualities, amid the politics and discourses that swirl around, about, despite, and through them.

Sex talk among young urban high school women

Over the last three years, we have conducted a number of focus groups with young women, young men, and young women and men, asking them to *teach us* about the worlds of teen sexualities. In a hope to move beyond the ‘missing discourse of desire’ (Fine, 1988), we have been trying to hear what and how young women experience *want* (see McClelland and Fine, 2008b).

In a ‘mixed’ urban high school – heterogeneous by social class, race/ethnicity, and neighborhood – we convened three focus groups for conversation about adolescent sexual desire. We asked the high school women to generate a list of questions one might ask in a survey of young people’s experiences of sexuality. We positioned the students as experts with bodies, biographies, and serious inquiries. We asked them to consult on a hypothetical project to design a national survey, to help us understand what needed to be asked of young people if we wanted to understand their experiences of sexuality more fully. In the wording of their projected or embodied concerns, the dominant discourses of victimization, prevention, waiting, secrecy, and shame speak.

Tammy: I would want to ask other girls how having sex affects your mentality, your mind. I had it really young, and I just want to know how sex affects you mentally.

Susan: What do you know about STDs? I learn from the nurse practitioner in the clinic but I would like to know more, and what could happen if you don’t use condoms.

Niqua: What do you think the Bush administration is trying to do? High school students aren’t stupid – look at the media, magazines, books, movies. Sex is everywhere. They have to teach us about it!

Parma: I don’t really need to ask anything or learn anything now, because I am definitely waiting until I am married.

Jacqui: Society gives a message that [teen sex] is horrible, so how do you know when you're ready or if the person is someone you can trust? Saying condoms don't work is so dangerous!

Susan: In Catholic school we learned that even if you're raped you can't get an abortion.

Lin: My parents are immigrants; I can't talk to my parents because of the shame. I don't want to put them through that but I need someone to speak with.

We hear many things over the course of this exchange. We hear discourses of moral judgement, fears, outrage, victimization, prevention, and many others. We could dismiss these statements as merely the repetition of what has been dutifully learned and repeated. We could interpret these exchanges as the result of shame, as an example of a missing discourse of desire, as evidence of these young women having learned their (sex ed.) lessons well, or as the result of the presence of two strangers collecting data on their responses. Any and all of these are possible. But for now, we are less interested in the literal words. Instead, we are more taken with the dynamics in the group and the discursive patterns – what is said and not said, by whom, and when.

For instance, we have found that with enough time, in safe collective settings, issues of desire, pleasure, and questions about entitlement do ultimately surface but only after young women speak through a kind of *discursive foreplay*. Early in these groups, someone says something like, 'You know, I want to be a virgin when I get married' (the abstinence discourse). Soon thereafter someone else mentions the dangers of sex: 'I think it's dirty' or 'If you start too young it messes up your mind' (the damage discourse). Then, suddenly or more slowly, the discourse of desire slips out:

As the discussion progressed, questions about sexual desire – outside of marriage and disconnected from reproduction – leaked into the room.

Michelle: So, if you could ask other young women any question about sexuality or desire, or whatever, what would you want to ask them?

Jacqui: So, it's the same thing, right, like being wet and having an orgasm, right?

Many respond: What do you mean?

Jacqui: Sometimes I don't get wet, and it hurts. But when I'm wet, that's an orgasm, right?

Khari: It's really important to be wet – you know, if you're not wet, or lubricated, you know the condom can break and then it's possible you can catch an infection or get pregnant. So you need to get some lubrication.

We took this opening to explore with the group the politics and practices of wetness, lubrication, and orgasm. As outsiders, we suggested to the young

women that they think about and explore their bodies, at home, to find sources of pleasure. But we note a recurrent dynamic – only after disease prevention and victimization discourses had been dutifully narrated by the group could pleasure poke its head into the room. We see this both in Parma's assertion about 'after marriage' and in Jacqui's more courageous question about 'being wet'.

Immediately thereafter, as if in an act of discursive chivalry, worries about disease prevention swooped in: 'If you're not wet . . . the condom can break . . . and you can catch an infection . . . you need to get some lubrication!' Khari saved us from desire, and returned us to (the safety of) prevention talk. Protection/prevention became a discursive cocoon for young women's talk of wanting/desire, a way to enter (and exit) the zone of pleasure.

Jacqui insisted that she was not about to purchase lubrication for protection or pleasure: 'I'm not spending money on lubrication.' And then in a shocking last-minute victory for a hybrid discourse of protection-and-pleasure, Khari opened her purse, removed a sample packet of lubrication, and handed it over to a very embarrassed, much delighted, laughing hysterically Jacqui as we all watched a conversation rarely had.

Analyzing sex talk through cellophane

While listening to the words of these young women, we found ourselves in a methodological dilemma: we heard them talking about themselves *as if* in a Bakhtinian poly-vocal/heteroglossia chorus (Bakhtin, 1981), reproducing and challenging the dominant discourses of shame, prevention, and protection. When we listen to young women talk about their bodies, and particularly their bodies in states of wanting and desire, we find ourselves in an echo chamber of MTV, popular culture, celebrities, church, school, parents, teachers, and politicians. The philosopher and literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin (1981, 1986) helps us understand how private utterances are connected with social practices, how utterances are woven with conventions, rules, and notions of appropriateness. He reminds (1986: 89) us that 'our speech . . . is filled with other's words, varying degrees of otherness or varying degrees of "our-own-ness"'.

With Bakhtin's theoretical insight, as well as years of feminist scholarship on the role of culture in gender identity development (Chapin, 2000; McKinley and Hyde, 1996; Tolman *et al.*, 2007; Thorne, 1997; Walkerdine, 1996; Ward, 2003; Ward *et al.*, 2005), we have borrowed a page from psychoanalytic and Foucauldian theories, to recognize that when someone speaks – maybe especially teen women – we must assume that there are other relevant words both unspoken and not-yet-spoken.

Some strains of feminist theories and methodologies have argued for turning our research gaze squarely on women's words, descriptions, behaviors, and experiences in order best to understand women's lives (Harding, 1986;

Hartstock, 1983a, 1983b; Reinhartz, 1992; Smith, 1979, 1987; see also Kitzinger and Wilkinson (1997) for exception). Indeed, Michelle has been among these writers. At this point and in this work, however, while we do not necessarily disagree, we want to draw our methodological attention to the bounded nature of the information that is possibly spoken in these spaces. This is a particularly feminist methodological dilemma we face: acknowledging the highly ideological contexts in which young women develop and speak their many *laminated* utterances.

Over fifteen years ago, Linda Alcoff (1991: 12) reminded feminists always to attend to the 'discursive context' in which words are spoken and not to forget that we cannot always see or hear the relevant environments of those who are speaking: the discursive context 'refer[s] to the connections and relations of involvement between utterance/text and other utterances and texts as well as the material practices in the relevant environment, which should not be confused with an environment spatially adjacent to the particular discursive event'. And taking this one step further, ten years ago, Celia Kitzinger and Sue Wilkinson (1997: 572; emphasis in original) reminded us that, 'part of being a feminist means not validating, but directly *challenging* women's taken-for-granted experience'.

Wilkinson (1998, 1999a, 1999b, 2006), Kitzinger (1992), and Stephen Frosh *et al.* (2003) help us think through analytic strategies to assess how discourses are engaged in focus groups, as well as how groups contend with unconscious conflicts in an effort to understand the dozens of voices being spoken in the room when only six or eight bodies are present. Frosh *et al.* (*ibid.*: 42) highlight the role of the *unspoken* in moments when the cultural and the individual can be co-revealed:

While culture makes available the subject positions we can inhabit, the 'investment' that people have in these subject positions is not necessarily captured by the articulation of the discourses themselves; rather, it may hinge on unspoken and at times unspeakable events, experiences and processes, all of them 'cultural', but also deeply embedded in subjectivity.

Thus we came to think about some new ideas for analysis, such as the *hidden transcripts of teen sexual desire*, borrowing from James Scott (1990), and *proximal discourse* to understand the sequence of utterances that needs to occur before the patently counter-hegemonic can be spoken. Who can speak these differently weighted discourses? Josselson (2004: 14–15) helped us move between analyses of what seems to be 'known' and 'not known' by young women simultaneously:

That which is unconscious may nevertheless be apparent in symbolization processes . . . Attention is directed then to the omissions, disjunctions, inconsistencies and contradictions in an account. It is what is latent,

hidden in an account that is of interest rather than the manifest narrative of the teller.

Hollway and Jefferson (2000) concur with Josselson, arguing that qualitative approaches have been useful in exploring the meanings and layers of phenomena, but may be limited when we commit to 'telling it like it is' (Midgley, 2006). We similarly wonder: how do we both respect the positions that young women speak *and still* analyze critically the ideologies and discourses through which the young women are speaking? Relying heavily now on Josselson (2004), we press: what does it mean to approach young female sexuality with a 'hermeneutic of suspicion'?

In the second half of this chapter, we turn explicitly to feminist methods, theorizing how we gather up evidence of desire, relying upon what we call 'methodological release points'. We try to understand how critical/feminist scholars can map, and interrupt, the political smothering, commercial seduction, and discursive moralizing that surround young women's sexual desires. And like cartographers of buried treasure, we try to follow the heat.

Methodological release points

Audre Lorde offers us a vivid image of desire and release. We borrow her image of 'the erotic' being released into the body in order to imagine new methods for inquiry about young women's desires. Lorde (1984: 57; emphasis added) writes:

During World War II, we bought sealed plastic packets of white, uncolored margarine, with a tiny, intense pellet of yellow coloring perched like a topaz just inside the clear skin of the bag. We would leave the margarine out for a while to soften, and then we would pinch the little pellet to break it inside the bag, releasing the rich yellowness into the soft pale mass of margarine. Then taking it carefully between our fingers, we would knead it gently back and forth, over and over, until the color had spread throughout the whole pound bag of margarine, thoroughly coloring it. *I find the erotic, such a kernel, within myself. When released from its intense and constrained pellet, it flows through and colors my life with a kind of energy that heightens and sensitizes and strengthens all my experience.*

Borrowing Lorde's image of erotic release, we reflect on methods that function as release points. We imagine release points as ways of making potential openings in the 'assumed' and the 'common sense' – even that of feminist research. Extending Lorde's image of the margarine kernel being released inside each woman's body, we move to theorize moments of release into the social body writ large (see McClelland and Fine, 2008b). Ideally, these methodologies

(and others) will help in developing new language to describe various aspects of female sexual want, desire, arousal, satisfaction, etc. as they circulate both in individual bodies and in the social body, releasing streams of the counter-hegemonic, the shameful, the whispered, the giggled, the embarrassing, the yearnings, and the confused. In sum, we imagine methodological practices as capable of shedding light in ways that make the context of the subject explicit and foregrounds the social unconscious (Steele and Morawski, 2002) as it pops into her mouth and body.

We present a set of release methods below. These are not methods for better, truer, more valid, or even sexier data. These methods are offered to expand the methodological imagination and respond, if partially, to the methodological dilemma of writing and researching *on* cellophane; helping us think through how we might take a young woman's words at face value *and* analyze what she may not necessarily be able or willing to see, feel, speak, know, or reveal.

We start with a discussion of *theory as design*, taking seriously the role that history, politics, theory, power, and local contexts have in shaping how we design our research projects. Second, we discuss *aesthetic and performative methods* that invite performance into the research dynamic, thickening the already complicated roles of 'viewer' and 'viewed'; taking on the critical process of watching, performing, gazing, and counter-gazing. Third, we combine various experiences of research projects in which groups of young women, men, or women and men have been asked to think through ideas, and we highlight the praxis of *collective, critical interrogations*. Fourth, we present the method of *asking the counter-intuitive and interrogating the obvious* with young women; inviting them to reinterpret 'common sense' and 'facts', turning long-held assumptions into research questions, and using data to interrogate cultural ideologies and mythologies. Finally, we discuss the use of feminist *participatory action research* (Lykes and Coquillon, 2006) as a method that disrupts the traditional power dynamics in research relationships and turns those who are studied into experts on their own conditions.

Our hope is that by sketching these methodological practices we can invite critical feminist researchers to acknowledge, engage, and queer, so to speak, the role of cellophane that we find in our research with young women.

Thick desire: theory and design as method

One answer to the dilemma presented in this chapter is to begin with theory; that is, to structure our arguments by theorizing explicitly the existence and suppression of young women's desire. In this regard, theories have the capacity to compel researchers to design projects that attach, for instance, individual narrations of embodied experiences to social policies, relationships, and dominant discourses. This may seem obvious or redundant, but we think it is important to correct what is sometimes a feminist genuflection toward the primacy of *voice*.

In our work together (Fine and McClelland, 2006), we have developed a theory of sexual desire, namely *thick desire*, that encourages researchers and activists to thread the sexual experiences and wants of young people to the ideologies, policies, power relations, institutions, families, and schools in which they live and develop. In 1988, Michelle published an article which argued that schools, by positioning young women primarily as potential victims of male sexual aggression, seriously compromised young women's (and men's) development of sexual subjectivities. She wrote: 'The authorized sexual discourses define what is safe, what is taboo, and what will be silenced . . . What results is a discourse of sexuality based on the male in search of desire and the female in search of protection' (Fine, 1988: 40). Before and after this article, feminist scholars, educators, and activists have voiced substantial concern about the missing discourse of female desire (see Rose, 2003; Snitow *et al.*, 1983; Tolman, 2002; Vance, 1984).

In a 2006 update to the 1988 piece, we introduce a theoretical revision to the missing discourse of desire (Fine and McClelland, 2006). We argue that young women (and men) are entitled to and psychologically motivated toward thick desire: a broad range of yearnings for meaningful intellectual, political, and social engagement, the possibility of financial independence, sexual and reproductive freedom, protection from racialized, homophobic, and sexualized violence, and a way to imagine living in the future tense (Appadurai, 2001, 2004; Nussbaum, 2003). A framework of thick desire locates sexual well-being within structural contexts that (dis)enable young women's economic, educational, social, and psychological rights. That is, we understand that young women's thick desires require a set of publicly funded *enabling conditions*, in which teen women have opportunities to: develop intellectually, emotionally, economically, and culturally; imagine themselves as sexual beings capable of pleasure and cautious about danger without carrying the undue burden of social, medical, and reproductive consequences; have access to information and healthcare resources; be protected from structural and intimate violence and abuse; and rely on a public safety net of resources to support youth, families, and community.

While we have theorized thick desire as the *outcome* of these enabling conditions, it also has the potential to live as a *precursor* to them. While the right to sexual desire/pleasure has historically been seen as a potential product of struggles for women's rights, it is interesting also to place bodily pleasure at the center of a rights campaign. Cesnabmihilo Dorothy Aken'ova, a sexual-rights activist with the International Center for Reproductive Health and Sexual Rights in Minna, Nigeria, said something we have not been able to forget since we heard it in 2006. In a simple sentence, she explained: 'If a Nigerian woman dares to ask for an orgasm, who knows, maybe next, she'll demand clean water.' Reversing the traditional logic of a socialist-feminist-postcolonial platform – give her good material conditions and reproductive changes will follow – Aken'ova argued (not instead, but alongside), *give her*

body a sense of entitlement to pleasure, and her political demands will follow. With Aken'ova's insight, we strive to theorize thick desire as not only produced by enabling conditions but *productive* of these conditions. Thick desire, then, may be a catalyst as well as an outcome of sexual rights.

By theorizing thick desire as political, social, and embodied, we begin from an argument that is grounded in human rights frameworks, *but it does not hinge on whether or not girls say they have desire.* That is, like reading, walking, breathing, bonding, relating, and learning, it is assumed that young people yearn for full lives, including sexual lives. Thick desire carves out a theoretical basket of rights, levels of analysis, and embodied experiences, within which 'voice' may be placed. But – and this is our key point – *the presence or absence of desire in young women's narratives does not determine its existence.* This is a bold statement that we think will serve to discard a false binary between 'missing' and 'present' discourses of desire for young people.

The theory of thick desire has shaped our program of research on young women's sexualities. We have written on the processes by which politics surround and embed themselves within the sexual lives of young women with close attention to the intersections of gender with class, race, disability, and sexuality. Sara created the empirical basis for an amicus brief for the US Supreme Court, cataloging the social science evidence that could support the legal arguments for young women's access to abortion without parental consent (see McClelland, 2005). Together, we have published a critical analysis of the abstinence-only curricula in low-income public schools (Fine and McClelland, 2006) and a scientific interrogation of the ideologies circulating within the federally funded 'embedded science' of abstinence-only-until-marriage curricula (McClelland and Fine, 2008a). Further, in an *Emory Law Journal* special volume on reproductive rights, we have summarized these social policies as they differentially affect the lives of teen women across lines of race, class, ethnicity, disability, and geography (Fine and McClelland, 2007). In these writings, we have drawn from observations in courts, focus groups we have conducted with young women and men, interviews with educators, reviews of youth-based websites, and critical analysis of empirical work on girls' and women's desire in the abstinence literatures and medical research to understand the material, legal, ideological, and educational contexts within which young women try to speak their desires.

While we recognize that this framing of thick desire does not entirely resolve our stated dilemma, it positions the investigation of desire within critical race studies, feminist theories, queer theory, and human rights contexts. Thick desire takes seriously gender, sexuality, race, class, geography, disability, and the fundamental(ist) role of the resource-low but surveillance-high state. It allows us to listen to young women's narratives *and also* to insist on the need to tether these narratives scrupulously to the political and social contexts from which they are spoken and silenced (Weis and Fine, 2004). Thus, in the focus group material excerpted above we can hear the dominant hegemonic press on

young women to speak for abstinence ('I will wait until I am married') or prevention ('I will use condoms'). But we also detected what we might call stuttering toward *desire*, buried in a question about wetness, slipping over into the iconic sharing of 'lube'. And in other segments of the transcript, we could hear the ways in which the school-based health clinic's nurse practitioner and the school's commitment to student inquiry have carved out safe spaces where young women could begin to whisper and inquire toward sexual health and desire. That is, in the focus group we could trace how the filaments of desire seek expression, suffer political suffocation, and weave through the student body as poly-vocal threads of discourse, relationships, and questions of entitlement. This framework has led us to locate *desire in motion between the outside and inside* of the body.

We use the remainder of this chapter to offer a series of responses to our dilemma. We discuss here how we might delicately peel back the cellophane, study what it is made of, and see/hear/study what lies at this borderland between child and adult, private and public, visceral and spoken.

Aesthetic and performative methods

[A]n aesthetic experience [is] that [which] resides in the connection between what a person already knows (of herself and her community), feels, and desires and what a new experience might offer.

(Gallagher, 2007: 161)

A number of critical, feminist scholars have written on methods for designing research through aesthetic youth performances (Driver, 2007; Gallagher, 2007; Rasmussen and Wright, 2001). Kathleen Gallagher, in her work with young people who produce and perform in dramatic performances that closely resemble (but do not replicate) their own lives, makes a compelling case for researchers to use performance as a tool to aid with data collection, as a way to unearth connections and insights that might not have otherwise been spoken. She explains that youth who are involved in performances as part of the research process have the chance to act out and then reflect on daily struggles, to interrogate the space between what she 'already knows . . . feels and desires – what a new experience might offer'. Gallagher argues that these performances offer 'a shared point of reference, across a range of very diverse lived experiences', and allow both researcher and participant the opportunity to 'examine precisely how the social, the political, the ideological are entering and shaping our lives and activities' (Gallagher, 2007: 132).

Gallagher has termed this the 'sociology of aesthetics' and explains that drama is integral to making social contexts explicit *in the course of data collection*. Indeed, with this insight, she reveals that 'new theories . . . become imaginable in the moment of dramatic improvisation' and echoes our own work with theory development and the power that theories have in organizing the worlds of both researchers and participants.

With similar approach to method, Rasmussen and Wright (2001: n.p.; emphasis in original) argue that 'dramatic knowing' enables both deconstruction of dominant ideologies and reconstruction of social possibilities:

[D]ramatic knowing, [can take] many forms in different human, societal or cultural contexts. The aesthetic identity of such practices implies both *experiential* and *experimental* processes where forms of cultural signs and representations are *deconstructed* and *reconstructed* within the dramatic world of space, time, figure and objects. The theatre/drama workshop provides such a space.

Committed to creating spaces for critique and imagination, Susan Driver (2007: 309) invites young people to produce video, dedicated to those 'poetic, embodied, or visually articulated moments of sexual subjectivity that are not easily transcribed into interview models'. She suggests the use of video as a potential means to invite the yet-to-be-spoken or never-to-be-spoken elements of girls' sexuality into conversation. It is not language per se that interests Driver, but performance and communication with another that has the opportunity to create space for girls to understand and embody their own desire, as well as circulate these understandings outside of the written text.

Driver has written about the need to allow elements of the unpredictable and the unnameable to enter into research conversations. Her critique of the semi-structured interview as a hallmark of feminist research in this area is useful as it highlights and echoes some of our own concerns about how one-on-one interviews and their dialogues may too quickly silence young women who are either unwilling or unable to verbalize what they feel. This is especially true if they are also unwilling or unable to hide in the folds of safe sex discourses as a means to talk about their experiences of desire. Driver (*ibid.*) explains why even the most conscientious feminists may end up silencing the girls they interview because the interview model inherently calls for 'transparent and direct naming of empirical experiences'. She argues that this leaves too little room for 'unpredictable fantasies and loose narrative lines of dialogue' to emerge because the social science paradigm does not encourage this kind of disorganized data to be shared in the interview space.

Driver focuses on the *production* of media rather than the mere consumption of media by young people. She argues (*ibid.*: 317) that it is in this production young people 'talk back' to the media, 'provid[ing] youth with the means to talk about, challenge, and go beyond heteronormative ideologies and institutions,' in essence allowing for the constantly 'viewed' young person to become a 'viewer'. This flipping of roles has the potential to offer young people, and young women in particular, a moment of reprieve – a moment when they are not observed, even if it is for just a moment. Examples like these remind us that research always has the potential to 'queer the gaze' (Doll, 1998) and to make room for new experiences *in the act* of collecting data on the experiences

of people. This work on aesthetic and performative experiences reminds us of this responsibility and opportunity most poignantly.

Collective interrogations: the intellectual and political possibilities of focus groups

From the beginning of second wave feminist psychology, researchers emphasized the importance of social context and insisted that feminist methods should be contextual: that is, they should avoid focusing on the individual devoid of social context, or separate from interactions with others.

(Wilkinson, 1999a: 224)

In our varied projects with/on teen women's sexualities, we have relied heavily on focus group conversations – primarily among young women but also, at times, with young men. Wilkinson alone (1998, 2006) and with Kitzinger (2000) and many others have crafted focus groups as spaces for talk that is ridden with anxiety, surrounded by surveillance, and in need of a soft interrogation on a landscape of shared vulnerabilities and wild wishes. We too found an ironic 'safety' in the open group, in part because no one student had to hold the anxiety, shame, embarrassment, or yearnings alone. Embarrassment lives in a focus group, but it also diffuses. Judgement survives, but does not land on one body. In groups, anxiety is allowed to float, whereas in one-on-one data-collection processes, the anxiety of endorsing illegitimate excess often has no room to drift and comes to rest, instead, in the only available discourses – safety and abuse. Groups allow distance, for giggling without hesitation. Individual interrogations with young women often move too easily to judgement and then to shame – even/especially if the interviewer says nothing. In focus groups, all of these emotions can travel around the room – anxiety, embarrassment, judgement – *across* bodies, diving into mouths and pelvises, across discourses that are acceptable (abstinence, morality, victimization, and prevention) and those more risqué (for an interesting parallel, see Haug, 1987).

Further, there is an important distinction between a focus group that asks young people to produce ideas and questions and one that asks them to reproduce facts and answers or admit/confess their sexual desires. We have found it essential to allow the subject of sex to travel between personal experiences and combined imaginations. A simple methodological probe to 'generate questions for teens throughout the country' or create a survey, design a textbook, or produce an MTV show allows young people the position of expertise, the comfort of inquiry, and a platform to speak for ambiguity.

Asking questions: the counter-intuitive and the obvious

Another important methodological release point has been the simple act of asking a question that appears naive but actually is quite provocative. This can either be a counter-intuitive question, such as ‘What is heterosexuality and why is it so common?’ (Kitzinger *et al.*, 1992: 293) or a more ‘obvious’ question that troubles the common sense, such as ‘Why do you think girls might want a waiver from parental consent laws for abortion?’

To illustrate, Jennifer Ayala (2006) interviewed sets of Latina teens and their mothers, separately and together, asking: ‘What have you taught each other about gender, sexuality, and power?’ In each couplet, when she turned to the fourteen- and fifteen-year-old girls, and asked, ‘So, now I know what your mother taught you, what have you taught your mother?’ the girls and their mothers were silent, taken aback, curious. But as she pressed, the responses were revealing. These largely immigrant mothers had taught their daughters lessons of culture and struggle. They nurtured them to seek opportunity, embody persistence, and display strength. In a complex dance of reciprocity, the daughters took up the work of educating their mothers about gender, sexuality, and power: they warned their mothers about discrimination – ‘you don’t have to take that from your boss/your boyfriend/my father’ – and, ultimately, how to buy sanitary napkins without embarrassment. Ayala, by asking the obvious question, was able to pry open the complex dynamics of mother–daughter relations, challenging the hegemonic (Eurocentric) beliefs in developmental psychology that mothers teach daughters and that teen daughters seek separation from their mothers. By engaging theoretically with the writings of Anzaldúa and mestiza consciousness, Ayala thickened our understandings of the negotiations of culture, gender, and power that transpire between mothers and daughters – particularly among immigrants.

A quite distinct example of the power of asking the simple and the obvious question comes out of one of our focus groups; in fact, in the conversation we describe earlier in this chapter. We had just asked the group what they needed to learn or talk about in terms of their sexuality. You will remember that Parma responded by saying that she did not need to learn about sex now because she was waiting until she was married to have it. Given the cultural and educational emphasis on ‘waiting until marriage’, this was not an unexpected response; the group did not remark on her comment and the conversation continued. We, however, took this as an opportunity to ask a simple question of this young woman and of the group: ‘Where will you learn about sexual pleasure after you are married?’ It was a simple inquiry borne out of curiosity, taking the young woman and her plans at face value. It was a question that did not insinuate that she was naive; we asked the question simply to find out more about her future plans for herself and her body. The question did not stop the group, nor did Parma respond, but it floated a thought into the group: Where

do we learn about these things later? Even if I do not do anything until I am married, who will teach me about my body then? Where will I go?

These questions should make all of us remember that education is not necessarily meant to be used the absolute moment we learn something new. When young people learn about algebra or learn to speak French, it is not because they will be doing complex math in the immediate future or because they are moving to Paris tomorrow. They learn skills that are meant to help them *throughout their lives* – sometimes, well after their schooling years are over. Sex education can be thought of in these same terms – as something that can be learned about today but not used until you want it to be.

Problematizing ‘facts’

A related strategy for opening up new conversations might involve asking teens to reassume the position of experts and problematize ‘facts’ – that is, reinterpret existing epidemiological data bases on teen sexuality. In our work, we have snuck up on this process but not actually tried it. We remembered only in retrospect, after one of our meetings with students and their teacher, that data are powerful tools.

For instance, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that one-third of fifteen to seventeen-year-olds (36 percent of males and 39 percent of females) have had vaginal intercourse; almost a third have ‘given’ oral sex (28 percent of males and 30 percent of females) and more have ‘received’ oral sex (40 percent of males and 38 percent of females). The CDC also reports that adolescent females are about twice as likely to report same-sex sexual contact as males (with slight variation in the language of the item, see CDC, 2005). That is, high school-aged young women are twice as likely as young men to engage in same-sex relationships; young women and young men are equally likely to give and receive oral sex. These are interesting findings; how might we understand these data?

These epidemiological ‘facts’ potentially double as potential evidence of young women’s heightened sexual agency and/or evidence of ever more sophisticated forms of their sexual exploitation. These public health indicators too often sit heavily as facts, self-evident proof of bodies acting out. More generously, we would like to reconsider these facts as *liminal interpretive spaces* (Morawski, 1994; Turner, 1967) where researchers can interrogate, with youth, various levels of meaning. What we would imagine is presenting to young people standard ‘facts’ and asking them to explicate *how these came to be*. That is, we would introduce *thick desire lite*, and ask them to re-view evidence on teen sexual behaviors as outcomes of social and political conditions and individual actions, asking, for example: ‘What do you think the stories are behind these data?’

Do these snippets of evidence suggest that young women are pursuing sexual freedoms and explorations for their own pleasure? What is behind these

rates of same-sex interactions for the young women in the CDC data? Are these based on same-sex attractions, newly found freedoms to cross gender and sexual boundaries, or other more complicated reasons that might bump into sexual performance for boys/men and perhaps even exploitation? Have same-sex relationships and cunnilingus been appropriated into patriarchal versions of heterosexual adolescence?

An important feminist critical method involves speaking with young people about these data as *outcomes* of unevenly distributed enabling conditions; that is, to invite them to interpret the material through the lens of thick desire. Typically, however, these data are either suppressed – to sustain the hegemonic belief that youth are indeed abstinent – or framed as evidence of good or bad, moral or immoral, reproductive and sexual ‘choices’ born in bad/immoral/out-of-control communities.

Consider a conversation we held with students in a classroom with teens in an all-Black, extremely impoverished high school:

The conversation turned to the question of abortion. Actually we turned the conversation toward abortion. The discomfort in the room was palpable; we could feel the strong resistance to acknowledging abortions in this low-income, predominantly African American and immigrant community.

Michelle: So, do people in this school talk about how you can get an abortion if you need or want one?

Teacher: Not so much in this community. They don’t really get abortions here.

Students: We don’t talk about it that much.

Most of the students in this class knew someone who was or had been pregnant. They could tell you who had given birth, but few would admit knowing anyone who had had an abortion (out loud; in that space; in front of us). The shared silence functioned as an ideological blanket, another layer of cellophane, hiding an important public health reality, protecting a local illusion of teen abstinence and religious rejection of abortion as a reproduction option, which would crumble if the evidence were exposed. That day we unfortunately missed an opportunity to talk with the young people about this disjuncture of evidence and perception. But we followed up and sent them the local statistics to educate gently and wedge open the deceptive and dangerous ‘common sense’ that ‘They don’t really get abortions here.’

Indeed, when we look at the rates at which young women are terminating their pregnancies nationally (Table 12.1), it is clear that there is a silent, yet highly regular process in which young women are engaging – privately, maybe with a friend or relative, perhaps with shame, perhaps with a sense of relief, but likely imagining themselves to be the only young woman in her community having an abortion.

Table 12.1 US Teen pregnancies, births, and abortions per thousand women aged fifteen to seventeen

	<i>Pregnancies</i>	<i>Births</i>	<i>Abortions</i>
White	31.0	19.4	11.6
African American	103.2	62.6	40.6
Latina	88.2	66.3	21.9

Source: Frost *et al.*, 2001: 7

Table 12.2 Percent of birth control methods by race, sexually active women aged fifteen–seventeen

	<i>Pill</i>	<i>Condoms</i>	<i>Withdrawal</i>	<i>No method</i>
White	18.9	44.0	11.5	12.3
African American	5.6	57.3	10.6	12.1
Latina	4.9	45.2	16.3	19.8

Source: Santelli *et al.*, 2004: 86

Table 12.1 displays the differential rates by which White, African American, and Latina teens experience pregnancy and abortions. For example, Latinas get pregnant close to three times the rate of White girls, and African Americans at rates more than three times those of Whites. Table 12.2 is more nuanced in terms of use of birth control. It shows that while all three groups rely on condoms more than other methods, White girls are the group most likely to use the pill (which requires access to a healthcare provider, a prescription, and some way to pay for contraception), African Americans are more likely to use condoms, and Latinas are more likely to rely on withdrawal or no method at all.

These data need to be displayed and unpacked insofar as they represent what happens in the absence of enabling conditions. They need to be demystified, not naturalized. They are too often seen as *behaviors* or *mistakes* made ‘by choice’ by youth. The radical twist recommended here is to theorize with youth how these ‘facts’ come to be and might not come to be; that these facts represent enduring, cumulative, and yet mutable outcomes of historic injustice, not inevitable facts of irresponsible human behavior in their communities. Thick desire requires us to wrestle with public health data and explain that choices are never made independent of history and politics, both outside and also within communities, homes, and bodies.

Participatory action research

When we can't dream any longer we die.

(Emma Goldman)

Across schools, communities, and prisons, the Participatory Action Research Collective at the Graduate Center, CUNY, has designed a series of participatory projects with youth to document not only the enormous costs of current conditions of injustice but movements for resistance (for more information, see Fine *et al.*, 2001, 2004; Fine and Torre, 2004, 2005; Torre, 2005). Indeed, over the past decade, in sites as varied as prisons, the South Bronx community-based organization Mothers on the Move, suburban public and private schools, and urban schools, we have taken up projects of participatory action research with youth (the 'we' includes a broad cast of researchers, including María Torre, Janice Bloom, April Burns, Lori Chajet, Monique Guishard, Yasser Payne, Rosemarie A. Roberts, and a number of youth, educators, and organizers). In these spaces, youth critique has attached to educational studies and harnessed to sustained struggle. Youth critique and research have risen to collective challenge and action – in schools, communities, prisons, courtrooms, and on the theater stage.

While the challenges of youth participatory action research (PAR) can be substantial, the contributions of critical research to social theory, social policy, and social movements can also be exhilarating in terms of challenging dominant scripts and reimagining new conceptions for social justice. We view PAR as a release method, and would like to encourage PAR projects focused on sexualities and the presence or absence of enabling conditions for healthy sexuality.

One example is a PAR project in which we (with Valerie Futch, Melissa Rivera, and Sarasota Planned Parenthood) are currently studying the sexual, social, and political development of young people who have participated in a Planned Parenthood student theater group, the SOURCE, in Florida over the past twenty-five years. This student theater group is renowned throughout the region for its candid educational plays that teach students through theater about topics related to peer relationships, self-esteem, sexualities, as well as many other concerns facing young adults in and out of school. We are working with a diverse group of young adults who were actors in this group over the last fifteen years; and with them as co-investigators, we are studying the relationships between sexual development and the complex web of influential forces, including local policies, sex education in schools, community organizations, and teen theater. Working with them, we are asking current and former theater participants about how these experiences affected their future sexual decisions and experiences.

We gathered for our first participatory advisory group meeting with participants from varied historic generations of SOURCE members, creating

maps of their lives, generating questions they would like to ask other members, remembering how trauma, opportunity, pain, depression, sexuality, coming out, abortions, babies, friends, disappointments, pregnancies, and eating disorders marked their bodies over the years from 'the pill to HIV/AIDS'. Over the course of this study, we will be gathering material, via the Internet, focus groups, and interviews, producing scholarship, pamphlets, and ultimately a performance of sexuality stories over thirty years, as the schools moved from comprehensive sexuality education to abstinence-only-until-marriage, and bodies moved from sexual liberation to fears about HIV.

Examples of PAR projects that focus on young female sexuality might include collectively designing a study on the geographies of sexuality – inviting young people to map the kinds of space they would need to discuss their sexual experiences, the kinds of questions they need to ask and have answered, and the kinds of concerns they have about their sexual health and development. The work could be undertaken with a broad-based 'contact zone' (Torre, 2005) of youth, with respectable elders and/or with specific sub-groups of young people engaged with projects of specific intellectual and political significance: for example, queer youth, young women with disabilities, or undocumented teen mothers, elite youth seeking outlets for social responsibility, children of incarcerated parents, and so on.

PAR projects trouble traditional questions of power and hegemony; they queer the relationships between researcher and researched; they bridge social theory with critique and imagination; and they create products and actions to provoke a different tomorrow. PAR, by design, works as a release point to challenge and rearticulate the 'common sense' and re-vision 'what could be'.

Conclusions

Over the past fifteen years, Deb Tolman, Sharon Thompson, Ann Snitow, Carole Vance, Tricia Rose, and others have written about the search and rescue of adolescent and adult female sexual desire. In 2006, Lisa Diamond placed the search for 'positive adolescent sexuality' into a strong theoretical and methodological framework, recognizing the need to approach this question from as many vantage points as possible:

[A]n increasing number of thoughtful and constructive critiques have challenged negatively oriented perspectives on sexual risk. These critiques have argued for more sensitive, in-depth, multi-method investigations into positive meanings and experiences of adolescent female sexuality that will allow us to conceptualize (and, ideally, advocate for) healthy sexual-development trajectories.

(Diamond 2006: 1)

We have proposed in this chapter a number of methodological suggestions for those who are caught up in these methodological dilemmas of how to peer through layers of cellophane and are trying to understand phenomena that are wrapped up in layers that are produced culturally, politically, and intersubjectively (by the very act of doing the research).

That is, we strive in this chapter to color in the missing discourse. Challenging long-held feminist commitments to 'voice', we invite feminist researchers to theorize the sexual imaginary for young women, *even when it is denied or stuttered*; to craft methods that account for the cellophane wrap; to study the structures and dynamics of young women's lives; and to design research that troubles the consensus that can be heard between dominant discourses and those who speak about them. We aim to balance what Josselson (2004, citing Ricouer) calls the 'hermeneutics of faith and suspicion' when we analyze young women's descriptions of their sexual lives that center on heterosexuality, abstinence, and prevention. We encourage researchers both to hear *and* to distrust the moment when words and actions speak one truth and, finally, to wonder about and dig for the unspoken, the dissociated, the embodied but denied, and the not-yet-acted-upon truths as well.

We aim to document the dynamics at the cellophane's boundary – when it is cement and when it is porous; when the young woman inside is speaking and stammering, trying to tell us something about her life. We are listening and trying our best to write these things down on a surface that refuses to hold our marks. She is there and she is almost not there. It is here – at this boundary – where we can document the poly-vocal sexual imaginary. This sexual imaginary does not spring alone from the inside of young women's heads or thighs; it is multifaceted and must be treated as fantastic, as intimate, as precious, as if it were the product of many tongues. In developing a methodology for this work, we do not try to get *beyond* or *beneath* the cellophane. We are, instead, interested in multiple methods and angles that can help splinter the light shed on young women's sexualities.

Note

- 1 While the District Court of Kansas permanently blocked enforcement of Attorney General Kline's legal opinion in April 2006, the spirit of Kline's opinion nevertheless highlights current trends in legislating the sexuality of minors.

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